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RUSSIA

RUSSIA

SIR DONALD MACKENZIE WALLACE

K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O.

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IN TWO VOLUMES

NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION: REVISED, RE-SET, AND IN GREAT PART RE-WRITTEN

VOL. II

WITH MAP SHOWING ZONES OF VEGETATION

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My administrative studies were begun in Novgorod. One of my reasons for spending a winter in that provincial capital was that I might study the provincial administration, and as soon as I had made the acquaintance of the leading officials I explained to them the object I had in view. With the kindly *bonhomie* which distinguishes the Russian educated classes, they all volunteered to give me every assistance in their power, but some of them, on mature reflection, evidently saw reason to check their first generous impulse. Among these was the Vice-Governor, a gentleman of German origin, and therefore more inclined to be pedantic than a genuine Russian. When I called on him one evening and reminded him of his friendly offer, I found to my surprise that he had in the meantime changed his

mind. Instead of answering my first simple inquiry, he stared at me fixedly, as if for the purpose of detecting some covert, malicious design, and then, putting on an air of official dignity, informed me that as I had not been authorised by the Minister to make these investigations, he could not assist me, and would certainly not allow me to examine the archives.

This was not encouraging, but it did not prevent me from applying to the Governor, and I found him a man of a very different stamp. Delighted to meet a foreigner who seemed anxious to study seriously in an unbiassed frame of mind the institutions of his much-maligned native country, he willingly explained to me the mechanism of the administration which he directed and controlled, and kindly placed at my disposal the books and documents in which I could find the historical and practical information which I required. This friendly attitude of his Excellency towards me soon became generally known in the town, and from that moment my difficulties were at an end. The minor officials no longer hesitated to initiate me into the mysteries of their respective departments, and at last even the Vice-Governor threw off his reserve and followed the example of his colleagues. The elementary information thus acquired I had afterwards abundant opportunities of completing by observation and study in other parts of the Empire, and I now propose to communicate to the reader a few of the more general results.

The gigantic administrative machine which holds together all the various parts of the vast Empire has been gradually created by successive generations, but we may say roughly that it was first designed and constructed by Peter the Great. Before his time the country was governed in a rude, primitive fashion.

The Grand Princes of Moscow, in subduing their rivals and annexing the surrounding principalities, merely cleared the ground for a great homogeneous State. Wily, practical politicians, rather than statesmen of the doctrinaire type, they never dreamed of introducing uniformity and symmetry into the administration as a whole. They developed the ancient institutions so far as these were useful and consistent with the exercise of autocratic power, and made only such alterations as practical necessity demanded. And these necessary alterations were more frequently local than general. Special decisions, instructions to particular officials, and charters for particular communes or proprietors, were much more common than general legislative measures.

In short, the old Muscovite Tsars practised a hand-to-mouth policy, destroying whatever caused temporary inconvenience, and giving little heed to what did not force itself upon their attention. Hence, under their rule the administration presented not only territorial peculiarities, but also an ill-assorted combination of different systems in the same district—a conglomeration of institutions belonging to different epochs, like a fleet composed of triremes, three-deckers, and ironclads.

This irregular system, or rather want of system, seemed highly unsatisfactory to the logical mind of Peter the Great, and he conceived the grand design of sweeping it away, and putting in its place a symmetrical bureaucratic machine. It is scarcely necessary to say that this magnificent project, so foreign to the traditional ideas and customs of the people, was not easily realised. Imagine a man, without technical knowledge, without skilled workmen, without good tools, and with no better material than soft, crumbling sandstone, endeavouring to build a palace on a marsh! The under-

taking would seem to reasonable minds utterly absurd, and yet it must be admitted that Peter's project was scarcely more feasible. He had neither technical knowledge, nor the requisite materials, nor a firm foundation to build on. With his usual Titanic energy he demolished the old structure, but his attempts to construct were little more than a series of failures. In his numerous ukazes he has left us a graphic description of his efforts, and it is at once instructive and pathetic to watch the great worker toiling indefatigably at his self-imposed task. His instruments are constantly breaking in his hands. The foundations of the building are continually giving way, and the lower tiers crumbling under the superincumbent weight. Now and then a whole section is found to be unsuitable, and is ruthlessly pulled down, or falls of its own accord. And yet the builder toils on, with a perseverance and an energy of purpose that compel admiration, frankly confessing his mistakes and failures, and patiently seeking the means of remedying them, never allowing a word of despondency to escape him, and never despairing of ultimate success. And at length death comes, and the mighty builder is snatched away suddenly in the midst of his unfinished labours, bequeathing to his successors the task of carrying on the great work.

None of these successors possessed Peter's genius and energy—with the exception perhaps of Catherine II.—but they were all compelled by the force of circumstances to adopt his plans. A return to the old rough-and-ready rule of the local *Voyevods* was impossible. As the Autocratic Power became more and more imbued with Western ideas, it felt more and more the need of new means for carrying them out, and accordingly it strove to systematise and centralise the administration.

In this change we may perceive a certain analogy with the history of the French administration from the reign of Philippe le Bel to that of Louis XIV. In both countries we see the central power bringing the local administrative organs more and more under its control, till at last it succeeds in creating a thoroughly centralised bureaucratic organisation. But under this superficial resemblance lie profound differences. The French kings had to struggle with provincial sovereignties and feudal rights, and when they had annihilated this opposition, they easily found materials with which to build up the bureaucratic structure. The Russian sovereigns, on the contrary, met with no such opposition, but they had great difficulty in finding bureaucratic material amongst their uneducated, undisciplined subjects, notwithstanding the numerous schools and colleges which were founded and maintained simply for the purpose of preparing men for the public service.

The administration was thus brought much nearer to the West-European ideal, but some people have grave doubts as to whether it became thereby better adapted to the practical wants of the people for whom it was created. On this point, a well-known Slavophil once made to me some remarks which are worthy of being recorded. "You have observed," he said, "that till very recently there was in Russia an enormous amount of official peculation, extortion, and misgovernment of every kind, that the courts of law were dens of iniquity, that the people often committed perjury, and much more of the same sort, and it must be admitted that all this has not yet entirely disappeared. But what does it prove? That the Russian people are morally inferior to the German? Not at all. It simply proves that the German system of administration, which was forced upon them without their consent,

was utterly unsuited to their nature. If a young growing boy be compelled to wear very tight boots, he will probably burst them, and the ugly rents will doubtless produce an unfavourable impression on the passers-by; but surely it is better that the boots should burst than that the feet should be deformed. Now, the Russian people was compelled to put on not only tight boots, but also a tight jacket, and, being young and vigorous, it burst them. Narrow-minded, pedantic Germans can neither understand nor provide for the wants of the broad Slavonic nature."

In its present form the Russian administration seems at first sight a very imposing edifice. At the top of the pyramid stands the Emperor, "the autocratic monarch," as Peter the Great described him, "who has to give an account of his acts to no one on earth, but has power and authority to rule his States and lands as a Christian sovereign according to his own will and judgment." Immediately below the Emperor we see the Council of State, the Committee of Ministers, and the Senate, which represent respectively the legislative, the administrative, and the judicial power. An Englishman glancing over the first volume of the great Code of Laws might imagine that the Council of State is a kind of Parliament, and the Committee of Ministers a cabinet in our sense of the term, but in reality both institutions are simply incarnations of the Autocratic Power. Though the Council is entrusted by law with many important functions—such as discussing Bills, criticising the annual budget, declaring war and concluding peace—it has merely a consultative character, and the Emperor is not in any way bound by its decisions. The Committee is not at all a cabinet as we understand the word. The Ministers are directly and individually responsible to the Emperor, and therefore the Com-

mittee has no common responsibility or other cohesive force. As to the Senate, it has descended from its high estate. It was originally entrusted with the supreme power during the absence or minority of the monarch, and was intended to exercise a controlling influence in all sections of the administration, but now its activity is restricted to judicial matters, and it is little more than a supreme court of appeal.

Immediately below these three institutions stand the Ministries, ten in number. They are the central points, in which converge the various kinds of territorial administration, and from which radiates the Imperial will all over the Empire.

For the purpose of territorial administration Russia Proper—that is to say, European Russia, exclusive of Poland, the Baltic Provinces, Finland and the Caucasus—is divided into forty-nine provinces or "Governments" (*gubernii*), and each Government is subdivided into Districts (*uyezdi*). The average area of a province is about the size of Portugal, but some are as small as Belgium, whilst one at least is twenty-five times as big. The population, however, does not correspond to the amount of territory. In the largest province, that of Archangel, there are only about 350,000 inhabitants, whilst in two of the smaller ones there are over three millions. The districts likewise vary greatly in size. Some are smaller than Oxfordshire or Buckingham, and others are bigger than the whole of the United Kingdom.

Over each province is placed a Governor, who is assisted in his duties by a Vice-Governor and a small council. According to the legislation of Catherine II., which still appears in the Code and has only been partially repealed, the Governor is termed "the steward of the province," and is entrusted with so many and such delicate duties, that in order to obtain qualified men for

the post, it would be necessary to realise the great Empress's design of creating, by education, "a new race of people." Down to the time of the Crimean War the Governors understood the term "stewards" in a very literal sense, and ruled in a most arbitrary, high-handed style, often exercising an important influence on the civil and criminal tribunals. These extensive and vaguely defined powers have now been very much curtailed, partly by positive legislation, and partly by increased publicity and improved means of communication. All judicial matters have been placed theoretically beyond the Governor's control, and many of his former functions are now fulfilled by the Zemstvo—the new organ of local self-government. Besides this, all ordinary current affairs are regulated by an already big and ever-growing body of instructions, in the form of Imperial orders and ministerial circulars, and as soon as anything not provided for by the instructions happens to occur, the minister is consulted through the post-office or by telegraph.

Even within the sphere of their lawful authority the Governors have now a certain respect for public opinion, and occasionally a very wholesome dread of casual newspaper correspondents. Thus the men who were formerly described by the satirists as "little satraps" have sunk to the level of subordinate officials. I can confidently say that many (I believe the majority) of them are honest, upright men, who are perhaps not endowed with any unusual administrative capacities, but who perform their duties faithfully according to their lights. If any representatives of the old "satraps" still exist, they must be sought for in the outlying Asiatic provinces.

Independent of the Governor, who is the local representative of the Ministry of the Interior, are a number of resident officials, who represent the other

ministries, and each of them has a bureau, with the requisite number of assistants, secretaries, and scribes.

To keep this vast and complex bureaucratic machine in motion it is necessary to have a large and well-drilled army of officials. These are drawn chiefly from the ranks of the Noblesse and the Clergy, and form a peculiar social class called *Tchinóvniks*, or men with *tchins*. As the *tchin* plays an important part in Russia, not only in the official world, but also to some extent in social life, it may be well to explain its significance.

All offices, civil and military, are, according to a scheme invented by Peter the Great, arranged in fourteen classes or ranks, and to each class or rank a particular name is attached. As promotion is supposed to be given according to personal merit, a man who enters the public service for the first time must, whatever be his social position, begin in the lower ranks, and work his way upwards. Educational certificates may exempt him from the necessity of passing through the lowest classes, and the Imperial will may disregard the restrictions laid down by law, but as a general rule a man must begin at or near the bottom of the official ladder, and he must remain on each step a certain specified time. The step on which he is for the moment standing, or, in other words, the official rank or *tchin* which he possesses, determines what offices he is competent to hold. Thus rank or *tchin* is a necessary condition for receiving an appointment, but it does not designate any actual office, and the names of the different ranks are extremely apt to mislead a foreigner.

We must always bear this in mind when we meet with those imposing titles which Russian tourists sometimes put on their visiting cards, such as "Conseiller de Cour," "Conseiller d'État," "Conseiller privé de S.M. l'Empereur de toutes les Russies." It would be

uncharitable to suppose that these titles are used with the intention of misleading, but that they do sometimes mislead there cannot be the least doubt. I shall never forget the look of intense disgust which I once saw on the face of an American who had invited to dinner a "Conseiller de Cour," on the assumption that he would have a Court dignitary as his guest, and who casually discovered that the personage in question was simply an insignificant official in one of the public offices. No doubt other people have had similar experiences. The unwary foreigner who has heard that there is in Russia a very important institution called the "Conseil d'État," naturally supposes that a "Conseiller d'État" is a member of that venerable body; and if he meets "Son Excellence le Conseiller privé," he is pretty sure to assume—especially if the word "actuel" has been affixed—that he sees before him a real living member of the Russian Privy Council. When to the title is added, "de S.M. l'Empereur de toutes les Russies," a boundless field is opened up to the non-Russian imagination. In reality these titles are not nearly so important as they seem. The *soi-disant* "Conseiller de Cour" has probably nothing to do with the Court. The Conseiller d'État is so far from being a member of the Conseil d'État that he cannot possibly become a member till he receives a higher *tchin*.* As to the Privy Councillor, it is sufficient to say that the Privy Council, which had a very odious reputation in its lifetime, died more than a century ago, and has not since been resuscitated. The explanation of these anomalies is to be found in the fact that the Russian *tchins*, like the German honorary titles—*Hofrath*, *Staatsrath*, *Geheimrath*—of which they are a literal translation, indicate not actual office, but simply honorary official rank.

* In Russian the two words are quite different; the Council is called *Gosudarstvenny Sovêt*, and the title *Státski Sovêtnik*.

Formerly the appointment to an office generally depended on the *tchin;* now there is a tendency to reverse the old order of things and make the *tchin* depend upon the office actually held.

The reader of practical mind who is in the habit of considering results rather than forms and formalities desires probably no further description of the Russian bureaucracy, but wishes to know simply how it works in practice. What has it done for Russia in the past, and what is it doing in the present?

At the present day, when faith in despotic civilisers and paternal government has been rudely shaken, and the advantages of a free, spontaneous national development are fully recognised, centralised bureaucracies have everywhere fallen into bad odour. In Russia the dislike to them is particularly strong, because it has there something more than a purely theoretical basis. The recollection of the reign of Nicholas I., with its stern military *régime*, and minute, pedantic formalism, makes many Russians condemn in no measured terms the administration under which they live, and most Englishmen will feel inclined to endorse this condemnation. Before passing sentence, however, we ought to know that the system has at least an historical justification, and we must not allow our love of constitutional liberty and local self-government to blind us to the distinction between theoretical and historical possibility. What seems to political philosophers abstractly the best possible government may be utterly inapplicable in certain concrete cases. We need not attempt to decide whether it is better for humanity that Russia should exist as a nation, but we may boldly assert that without a strongly centralised administration Russia would never have become one of the great European Powers. Until comparatively recent times the part of the world which is known

as the Russian Empire was a conglomeration of independent or semi-independent political units, animated with centrifugal as well as centripetal forces; and even at the present day it is far from being a compact homogeneous State. It was the autocratic power, with the centralised administration as its necessary complement, that first created Russia, then saved her from dismemberment and political annihilation, and ultimately secured for her a place among European nations by introducing Western civilisation.

Whilst thus recognising clearly that autocracy and a strongly centralised administration were necessary first for the creation and afterwards for the preservation of national independence, we must not shut our eyes to the evil consequences which resulted from this unfortunate necessity. It was in the nature of things that the Government, aiming at the realisation of designs which its subjects neither sympathised with nor clearly understood, should have become separated from the nation; and the reckless haste and violence with which it attempted to carry out its schemes aroused a spirit of positive opposition among the masses. A considerable section of the people long looked on the reforming Tsars as incarnations of the spirit of evil, and the Tsars in their turn looked upon the people as raw material for the realisation of their political designs. This peculiar relation between the nation and the Government has given the key-note to the whole system of administration. The Government has always treated the people as minors, incapable of understanding its political aims, and only very partially competent to look after their own local affairs. The officials have naturally acted in the same spirit. Looking for direction and approbation merely to their superiors, they have systematically treated those over whom they were placed, as a conquered or

inferior race. The State has thus come to be regarded as an abstract entity, with interests entirely different from those of the human beings composing it; and in all matters in which State interests are supposed to be involved, the rights of individuals are ruthlessly sacrificed.

If we remember that the difficulties of centralised administration must be in direct proportion to the extent and territorial variety of the country to be governed, we may readily understand how slowly and imperfectly the administrative machine necessarily works in Russia. The whole of the vast region stretching from the Polar Ocean to the Caspian, and from the shores of the Baltic to the confines of the Celestial Empire, is administered from St. Petersburg. The genuine bureaucrat has a wholesome dread of formal responsibility, and generally tries to avoid it by taking all matters out of the hands of his subordinates, and passing them on to the higher authorities. As soon, therefore, as affairs are caught up by the administrative machine they begin to ascend, and probably arrive some day at the cabinet of the minister. Thus the ministries are flooded with papers —many of the most trivial import—from all parts of the Empire; and the higher officials, even if they had the eyes of an Argus and the hands of a Briareus, could not possibly fulfil conscientiously the duties imposed on them. In reality the Russian administrators of the higher ranks recall neither Argus nor Briareus. They commonly show neither an extensive nor a profound knowledge of the country which they are supposed to govern, and seem always to have a fair amount of leisure time at their disposal.

Besides the unavoidable evils of excessive centralisation, Russia has had to suffer much from the jobbery, venality, and extortion of the officials.

When Peter the Great one day proposed to hang every man who should steal as much as would buy a rope, his Procurator-General frankly replied that if his Majesty put his project into execution there would be no officials left. "We all steal," added the worthy official; "the only difference is that some of us steal larger amounts and more openly than others." Since these words were spoken nearly two centuries have passed, and during all that time Russia has been steadily making progress, but until the accession of Alexander II. in 1855 little change took place in the moral character of the administration. Some people still living can remember the time when they could have repeated, without much exaggeration, the confession of Peter's Procurator-General.

To appreciate aright this ugly phenomenon we must distinguish two kinds of venality. On the one hand there was the habit of exacting what are vulgarly termed "tips" for services performed, and on the other there were the various kinds of positive dishonesty. Though it might not be always easy to draw a clear line between the two categories, the distinction was fully recognised in the moral consciousness of the time, and many an official who regularly received "sinless revenues" (*bezgréshniye dokhódi*), as the tips were sometimes called, would have been very indignant had he been stigmatised as a dishonest man. The practice was, in fact, universal, and could be, to a certain extent, justified by the smallness of the official salaries. In some departments there was a recognised tariff. The "brandy farmers," for example, who worked the State Monopoly for the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors, paid regularly a fixed sum to every official, from the Governor to the policeman, according to his rank. I knew of one case where an official, on receiving a larger sum

than was customary, conscientiously handed back the change! The other and more heinous offences were by no means so common, but were still fearfully frequent. Many high officials and important dignitaries were known to receive large revenues, to which the term "sinless" could not by any means be applied, and yet they retained their position, and were received in society with respectful deference.

The Sovereigns were well aware of the abuses, and strove more or less to root them out, but the success which attended their efforts does not give us a very exalted idea of the practical omnipotence of autocracy. In a centralised bureaucratic administration, in which each official is to a certain extent responsible for the sins of his subordinates, it is always extremely difficult to bring an official culprit to justice, for he is sure to be protected by his superiors; and when the superiors are themselves habitually guilty of malpractices, the culprit is quite safe from exposure and punishment. The Tsar, indeed, might do much towards exposing and punishing offenders if he could venture to call in public opinion to his assistance, but in reality he is very apt to become a party to the system of hushing up official delinquencies. He is himself the first official in the realm, and he knows that the abuse of power by a subordinate has a tendency to produce hostility towards the fountain of all official power. Frequent punishment of officials might, it is thought, diminish public respect for the Government, and undermine that social discipline which is necessary for the public tranquillity. It is therefore considered expedient to give to official delinquencies as little publicity as possible.

Besides this, strange as it may seem, a Government which rests on the arbitrary will of a single individual is, notwithstanding occasional outbursts of severity,

much less systematically severe than authority founded on free public opinion. When delinquencies occur in very high places the Tsar is almost sure to display a leniency approaching to tenderness. If it be necessary to make a sacrifice to justice, the sacrificial operation is made as painless as may be, and illustrious scapegoats are not allowed to die of starvation in the wilderness—the wilderness being generally Paris or the Riviera. This fact may seem strange to those who are in the habit of associating autocracy with Neapolitan dungeons and the mines of Siberia, but it is not difficult to explain. No individual, even though he be the Autocrat of all the Russias, can so case himself in the armour of official dignity as to be completely proof against personal influences. The severity of autocrats is reserved for political offenders, against whom they naturally harbour a feeling of personal resentment. It is so much easier for us to be lenient and charitable towards a man who sins against public morality, than towards one who sins against ourselves!

In justice to the bureaucratic reformers in Russia, it must be said that they have preferred prevention to cure. Refraining from all Draconian legislation, they have put their faith in a system of ingenious checks and a complicated formal procedure. When we examine the complicated formalities and labyrinthine procedure by which the administration is controlled, our first impression is that administrative abuses must be almost impossible. Every possible act of every official seems to have been foreseen, and every possible outlet from the narrow path of honesty seems to have been carefully walled up. As the English reader has probably no conception of formal procedure in a highly centralised bureaucracy, let me give, by way of illustration, an instance which accidentally came to my knowledge.

In the residence of a Governor-General one of the stoves is in need of repairs. An ordinary mortal may assume that a man with the rank of Governor-General may be trusted to expend a few shillings conscientiously, and that consequently his Excellency will at once order the repairs to be made and the payment to be put down among the petty expenses. To the bureaucratic mind the case appears in a very different light. All possible contingencies must be carefully provided for. As a Governor-General may possibly be possessed with a mania for making useless alterations, the necessity for the repairs ought to be verified; and as wisdom and honesty are more likely to reside in an assembly than in an individual, it is well to entrust the verification to a council. A council of three or four members accordingly certifies that the repairs are necessary. This is pretty strong authority, but it is not enough. Councils are composed of mere human beings, liable to error and subject to be intimidated by a Governor-General. It is prudent, therefore, to demand that the decision of the council be confirmed by the Procureur, who is directly subordinated to the Minister of Justice. When this double confirmation has been obtained, an architect examines the stove, and makes an estimate. But it would be dangerous to give *carte blanche* to an architect, and therefore the estimate has to be confirmed, first by the aforesaid council and afterwards by the Procureur.

When all these formalities—which require sixteen days and ten sheets of paper—have been duly observed, his Excellency is informed that the contemplated repairs will cost two roubles and forty kopeks, or about five shillings of our money. Even here the formalities do not stop, for the Government must have the assurance that the architect who made the estimate and superintended the repairs has not been guilty of negligence.

A second architect is therefore sent to examine the work, and his report, like the estimate, requires to be confirmed by the council and the Procureur. The whole correspondence lasts thirty days, and requires no less than thirty sheets of paper! Had the person who desired the repairs been not a Governor-General but an ordinary mortal, it is impossible to say how long the procedure might have lasted.*

It might naturally be supposed that this circuitous and complicated method, with its registers, ledgers, and minutes of proceeding, must at least prevent pilfering; but this *à priori* conclusion has been emphatically belied by experience. Every new ingenious device had merely the effect of producing a still more ingenious means of avoiding it. The system did not restrain those who wished to pilfer, and it had a deleterious effect on honest officials, by making them feel that the Government reposed no confidence in them. Besides this, it produced among all officials, honest and dishonest alike, the habit of systematic falsification. As it was impossible for even the most pedantic of men—and pedantry, be it remarked, is a rare quality among Russians—to fulfil conscientiously all the prescribed formalities, it became customary to observe the forms merely on paper. Officials certified facts which they never dreamed of examining, and secretaries gravely wrote the minutes of meetings that had never been held! Thus, in the case above cited, the repairs were in reality begun and ended long before the architect was officially authorised to begin the work. The comedy

* In fairness, I feel constrained to add that incidents of this kind occasionally occur—or at least occurred as late as 1886—in our Indian Administration. I remember an instance of a pane of glass being broken in the Viceroy's bed-room in the Viceregal Lodge at Simla, and it would have required nearly a week, if the official procedure had been scrupulously observed, to have it replaced by the Public Works Department.

was nevertheless gravely played out to the end, so that anyone afterwards revising the documents would have found that everything had been done in perfect order.

Perhaps the most ingenious means for preventing administrative abuses was devised by the Emperor Nicholas I. Fully aware that he was regularly and systematically deceived by the ordinary officials, he formed a body of well-paid officers, called the "Gendarmerie," who were scattered over the country, and ordered to report directly to his Majesty whatever seemed to them worthy of attention. Bureaucratic minds considered this an admirable expedient; and the Tsar confidently expected that he would, by means of these official observers who had no interest in concealing the truth, be able to know everything, and to correct all official abuses. In reality the institution produced few good results, and in some respects had a very pernicious influence. Though picked men and provided with good salaries, these officers were all more or less permeated with the prevailing spirit. They could not but feel that they were regarded as spies and informers,—a humiliating conviction, little calculated to develop that feeling of self-respect which is the main foundation of uprightness—and that all their efforts could do but little good. They were, in fact, in pretty much the same position as Peter's Procurator-General, and, with true Russian *bonhomie*, they disliked ruining individuals who were no worse than the majority of their fellows. Besides this, according to the received code of official morality, insubordination was a more heinous sin than dishonesty, and political offences were regarded as the blackest of all. The gendarmerie officers shut their eyes, therefore, to the prevailing abuses, which were believed to be incurable, and directed their attention to real or imaginary political delinquencies. Oppression

and extortion remained unnoticed, whilst an incautious word or a foolish joke at the expense of the Government was too often magnified into an act of high treason.

This force still exists under a slightly modified form. Towards the close of the reign of Alexander II. (1880), when Count Loris Mélikof, with the sanction and approval of his august master, was preparing to introduce a system of liberal political reforms, it was intended to abolish the gendarmerie as an organ of political espionage, and accordingly the direction of it was transferred from the so-called Third Section of his Imperial Majesty's Chancery to the Ministry of the Interior; but when the benevolent monarch was, a few months afterwards, assassinated by revolutionists, the project was naturally abandoned, and the Corps of Gendarmes, while remaining nominally under the Minister of the Interior, was practically reinstated in its former position. Now, as then, it serves as a kind of supplement to the ordinary police, and is generally employed for matters in which secrecy is required. Unfortunately it is not bound by those legal restrictions which protect the public against the arbitrary will of the ordinary authorities. In addition to its regular duties it has a vaguely defined roving commission to watch and arrest all persons who seem to it in any way dangerous or *suspectes*, and it may keep such in confinement for an indefinite time, or remove them to some distant and inhospitable part of the Empire, without making them undergo a regular trial. It is, in short, the ordinary instrument for punishing political dreamers, suppressing secret societies, counteracting political agitations, and in general executing the extra-legal orders of the Government.

My relations with this anomalous branch of the administration were somewhat peculiar. After my

experience with the Vice-Governor of Novgorod I determined to place myself above suspicion, and accordingly applied to the "Chef des Gendarmes" for some kind of official document which would prove to all officials with whom I might come in contact that I had no illicit designs. My request was granted, and I was furnished with the necessary documents; but I soon found that in seeking to avoid Scylla I had fallen into Charybdis. In calming official suspicions, I inadvertently aroused suspicions of another kind. The documents proving that I enjoyed the protection of the Government made many people suspect that I was an emissary of the gendarmerie, and greatly impeded me in my efforts to collect information from private sources. As the private were for me more important than the official sources of information, I refrained from asking for a renewal of the protection, and wandered about the country as an ordinary unprotected traveller. For some time I had no cause to regret this decision. I knew that I was pretty closely watched, and that my letters were occasionally opened in the post-office, but I was subjected to no further inconvenience. At last, when I had nearly forgotten all about Scylla and Charybdis, I one night unexpectedly ran upon the former, and, to my astonishment, found myself formally arrested! The incident happened in this wise.

I had been visiting Austria and Servia, and after a short absence, returned to Russia through Moldavia. On arriving at the Pruth, which there forms the frontier, I found an officer of gendarmerie, whose duty it was to examine the passports of all passers-by. Though my passport was completely *en règle*, having been duly *visé* by the British and Russian Consuls at Galatz, this gentleman subjected me to a searching examination regarding my past life, actual

occupation, and intentions for the future. On learning that I had been for more than two years travelling in Russia at my own expense, for the simple purpose of collecting miscellaneous information, he looked incredulous, and seemed to have some doubts as to my being a genuine British subject; but when my statements were confirmed by my travelling companion, a Russian friend who carried awe-inspiring credentials, he countersigned my passport, and allowed us to depart. The inspection of our luggage by the custom-house officers was soon got over; and as we drove off to the neighbouring village, where we were to spend the night, we congratulated ourselves on having escaped for some time from all contact with the official world. In this we were "reckoning without the host." As the clock struck twelve that night I was roused by a loud knocking at my door, and after a good deal of parley, during which someone proposed to effect an entrance by force, I drew the bolt. The officer who had signed my passport entered, and said, in a stiff, official tone, "I must request you to remain here for twenty-four hours."

Not a little astonished by this announcement, I ventured to inquire the reason for this strange request.

"That is my business," was the laconic reply.

"Perhaps it is; still you must, on mature consideration, admit that I too have some interest in the matter. To my extreme regret I cannot comply with your request, and must leave at sunrise."

"You shall not leave. Give me your passport."

"Unless detained by force, I shall start at four o'clock; and as I wish to get some sleep before that time, I must request you instantly to retire. You had the right to stop me at the frontier, but you have no right to come and disturb me in this fashion, and I

shall certainly report you. My passport I shall give to none but a regular officer of police."

Here followed a long discussion on the rights, privileges, and general character of the gendarmerie, during which my opponent gradually laid aside his dictatorial tone, and endeavoured to convince me that the honourable body to which he belonged was merely an ordinary branch of the administration. Though evidently irritated, he never, I must say, overstepped the bounds of politeness, and seemed only half convinced that he was justified in interfering with my movements. When he found that he could not induce me to give up my passport he withdrew, and I again lay down to rest; but in about half an hour I was again disturbed. This time an officer of regular police entered, and demanded my "papers." To my inquiries as to the reason of all this disturbance, he replied, in a very polite, apologetic way, that he knew nothing about the reason, but he had received orders to arrest me, and must obey. To him I delivered my passport, on condition that I should receive a written receipt, and should be allowed to telegraph to the British ambassador in St. Petersburg.

Early next morning I telegraphed to the ambassador, and waited impatiently all day for a reply. I was allowed to walk about the village and the immediate vicinity, but of this permission I did not make much use. The village population was entirely Jewish, and Jews in that part of the world have a wonderful capacity for spreading intelligence. By the early morning there was probably not a man, woman, or child in the place who had not heard of my arrest, and many of them felt a not unnatural curiosity to see the malefactor who had been caught by the police. To be stared at as a malefactor is not very agreeable, so I preferred to remain in my room,

where, in the company of my friend, who kindly remained with me and made small jokes about the boasted liberty of British subjects, I spent the time pleasantly enough. The most disagreeable part of the affair was the uncertainty as to how many days, weeks, or months I might be detained, and on this point the police-officer would not even hazard a conjecture.

The detention came to an end sooner than I expected. On the following day—that is to say, about thirty-six hours after the nocturnal visit—the police officer brought me my passport, and at the same time a telegram from the British Embassy informed me that the central authorities had ordered my release. On my afterwards pertinaciously requesting an explanation of the unceremonious treatment to which I had been subjected, the Minister for Foreign Affairs declared that the authorities expected a person of my name to cross the frontier about that time with a quantity of false bank-notes, and that I had been arrested by mistake. I must confess that this explanation, though official, seemed to me more ingenious than satisfactory, but I was obliged to accept it for what it was worth. At a later period I had again the misfortune to attract the attention of the secret police, but I reserve the incident till I come to speak of my relations with the revolutionists.

From all I have seen and heard of the gendarmerie I am disposed to believe that the officers are for the most part polite, well-educated men, who seek to fulfil their disagreeable duties in as inoffensive a way as possible. It must, however, be admitted that they are generally regarded with suspicion and dislike, even by those people who fear the attempts at revolutionary propaganda which it is the special duty of the gendarmerie to discover and suppress. Nor need this surprise us. Though very many people believe

in the necessity of capital punishment, there are few who do not feel a decided aversion to the public executioner.

The only effectual remedy for administrative abuses lies in placing the administration under public control. This has been abundantly proved in Russia. All the efforts of the Tsars during many generations to check the evil by means of ingenious bureaucratic devices proved utterly fruitless. Even the iron will and gigantic energy of Nicholas I. were insufficient for the task. But when, after the Crimean War, there was a great moral awakening, and the Tsar called the people to his assistance, the stubborn, deep-rooted evils immediately disappeared. For a time venality and extortion were unknown, and since that period they have never been able to regain their old force.

At the present moment it cannot be said that the administration is immaculate, but it is incomparably purer than it was in old times. Though public opinion is no longer so powerful as it was in the early sixties, it is still strong enough to repress many malpractices which in the time of Nicholas I. and his predecessors were too frequent to attract attention. On this subject I shall have more to say hereafter.

If administrative abuses are rife in the Empire of the Tsars, it is not from any want of carefully prepared laws. In no country in the world, perhaps, is the legislation more voluminous, and in theory, not only the officials, but even the Tsar himself, must obey the laws he has sanctioned, like the meanest of his subjects. This is one of those cases, not infrequent in Russia, in which theory differs somewhat from practice. In real life the Emperor may at any moment override the law by means of what is called

a Supreme Command (*vysotcháishiye povelêniyé*), and a minister may "interpret" a law in any way he pleases by means of a circular. This is a frequent cause of complaint even among those who wish to uphold the Autocratic Power. In their opinion law-respecting autocracy wielded by a strong Tsar is an excellent institution for Russia; it is arbitrary autocracy wielded by irresponsible ministers that they object to.

As Englishmen may have some difficulty in imagining how laws can come into being without a Parliament or Legislative Chamber of some sort, I shall explain briefly how they are manufactured by the Russian bureaucratic machine without the assistance of representative institutions.

When a minister considers that some institution in his branch of the service requires to be reformed, he begins by submitting to the Emperor a formal report on the matter. If the Emperor agrees with his minister as to the necessity for reform, he orders a Commission to be appointed for the purpose of considering the subject and preparing a definite legislative project. The Commission meets and sets to work in what seems a very thorough way. It first studies the history of the institution in Russia from the earliest times downwards—or rather, it listens to an essay on the subject, especially prepared for the occasion by some official who has a taste for historical studies, and can write in a pleasant style. The next step—to use a phrase which often occurs in the minutes of such Commissions—consists in "shedding the light of science on the question" (*prolít' na dyêlo svêt naúki*). This important operation is performed by preparing a memorial containing the history of similar institutions in foreign countries, and an elaborate exposition of numerous theories held by French and

German philosophical jurists. In these memorials it is often considered necessary to include every European country except Turkey, and sometimes the small German States and principal Swiss cantons are treated separately.

To illustrate the character of these wonderful productions, let me give an example. From a pile of such papers lying before me I take one almost at random. It is a memorial relating to a proposed reform of benevolent institutions. First I find a philosophical disquisition on benevolence in general; next, some remarks on the Talmud and the Koran; then a reference to the treatment of paupers in Athens after the Peloponnesian War, and in Rome under the emperors: then some vague observations on the Middle Ages, with a quotation that was evidently intended to be Latin; lastly, comes an account of the poor-laws of modern times, in which I meet with "the Anglo-Saxon domination," King Egbert, King Ethelred; "a remarkable book of Icelandic laws, called Hragas"; Sweden and Norway, France, Holland, Belgium, Prussia, and nearly all the minor German States. The most wonderful thing is that all this mass of historical information, extending from the Talmud to the most recent legislation of Hesse-Darmstadt, is compressed into twenty-one octavo pages! The doctrinal part of the memorandum is not less rich. Many respected names from the literature of Germany, France, and England are forcibly dragged in; and the general conclusion drawn from this mass of raw, undigested materials is believed to be "the latest results of science."

Does the reader suspect that I have here chosen an extremely exceptional case? If so, let us take the next paper in the file. It refers to a project of law regarding imprisonment for debt. On the first page I find references to "the Salic laws of the fifth

century," and the "Assises de Jerusalem, A.D. 1099." That, I think, will suffice. Let us pass, then, to the next step.

When the quintessence of human wisdom and experience has thus been extracted, the commission considers how the valuable product may be applied to Russia, so as to harmonise with the existing general conditions and local peculiarities. For a man of practical mind this is, of course, the most interesting and most important part of the operation, but from Russian legislators it receives comparatively little attention. Very often have I turned to this section of official papers in order to obtain information regarding the actual state of the country, and in every case I have been grievously disappointed. Vague general phrases, founded on *à priori* reasoning rather than on observation, together with a few statistical tables—which the cautious investigator should avoid as he would an ambuscade—are too often all that is to be found. Through the thin veil of pseudo-erudition the real facts are clear enough. These philosophical legislators, who have spent their lives in the official atmosphere of St. Petersburg, know as much about Russia as the genuine cockney knows about Greater Britain, and in this part of their work they derive no assistance from the learned German treatises which supply an unlimited amount of historical facts and philosophical speculation.

From the Commission the project passes to the Council of State, where it is certainly examined and criticised, and perhaps modified, but it is not likely to be improved from the practical point of view, because the members of the Council are merely *ci-devant* members of similar commissions, hardened by a few additional years of official routine. The Council is, in fact, an assembly of *tchinóvniks* who know little of the

practical, everyday wants of the unofficial classes. No merchant, manufacturer, or farmer ever enters its sacred precincts, so that its bureaucratic serenity is rarely disturbed by practical objections. It is not surprising, therefore, that it has been known to pass laws which were found at once to be absolutely unworkable.

From the Council of State the Bill is taken to the Emperor, and he generally begins by examining the signatures. The "Ayes" are in one column and the "Noes" in another. If his Majesty is not specially acquainted with the matter—and he cannot possibly be acquainted with all the matters submitted to him—he usually signs with the majority, or on the side where he sees the names of officials in whose judgment he has special confidence; but if he has strong views of his own, he places his signature in whichever column he thinks fit, and it outweighs the signatures of any number of Councillors. Whatever side he supports, that side "has it," and in this way a small minority may be transformed into a majority. When the important question, for example, as to how far classics should be taught in the ordinary schools was considered by the Council, it is said that only two members signed in favour of classical education, which was excessively unpopular at the moment; but the Emperor Alexander III., disregarding public opinion and the advice of his Councillors, threw his signature into the lighter scale, and the classicists were victorious.

CHAPTER XXV.

MOSCOW AND THE SLAVOPHILS.

Two Ancient Cities—Kief not a good Point for studying Old Russian National Life—Great Russians and Little Russians—Moscow—Easter Eve in the Kremlin—Curious Custom—Anecdote of the Emperor Nicholas—Domiciliary Visits of the Iberian Madonna—The Streets of Moscow—Recent Changes in the Character of the City—Vulgar Conception of the Slavophils—Opinion Founded on Personal Acquaintance—Slavophil Sentiment a Century ago—Origin and Development of the Slavophil Doctrine—Slavophilism essentially Moscovite—The Panslavist Element—The Slavophils and the Emancipation.

In the last chapter, as in many of the preceding ones, the reader must have observed that at one moment there was a sudden break, almost a solution of continuity, in Russian national life. The Tsardom of Muscovy, with its ancient Oriental costumes and Byzantine traditions, unexpectedly disappears, and the Russian Empire, clad in modern garb and animated with the spirit of modern progress, steps forward uninvited into European history. Of the older civilisation, if civilisation it can be called, very little survived the political transformation, and that little is generally supposed to hover ghostlike around Kief and Moscow. To one or other of these towns, therefore, the student who desires to learn something of genuine old Russian life, untainted by foreign influences, naturally wends his way.

For my part I thought first of settling for a time in Kief, the oldest and most revered of Russian cities, where missionaries from Byzantium first planted Christianity on Russian soil, and where thousands of pilgrims still assemble yearly from far and near, to prostrate themselves before the Holy Icons in the churches and to venerate the relics of the blessed

saints and martyrs in the catacombs of the great monastery. I soon discovered, however, that Kief, though it represents in a certain sense the Byzantine traditions, so dear to the Russian people, is not a good point of observation for studying the Russian character. It was early exposed to the ravages of the nomadic tribes of the Steppe, and when it was liberated from those incursions it was seized by the Poles and Lithuanians, and remained for centuries under their domination. Only in comparatively recent times did it begin to recover its Russian character—a university having been created there for that purpose after the Polish insurrection of 1830. Even now the process of Russification is far from complete, and the Russian elements in the population are far from being pure in the nationalist sense.

The city and the surrounding country are, in fact, Little Russian rather than Great Russian, and between these two sections of the population there are profound differences—differences of language, costume, traditions, popular songs, proverbs, folk-lore, domestic arrangements, mode of life, and Communal organisation. In these and other respects the Little Russians, South Russians, Ruthenes, or Khokhlý, as they are variously designated, differ from the Great Russians of the North, who form the predominant factor in the Empire, and who have given to that wonderful structure its essential characteristics. Indeed, if I did not fear to ruffle unnecessarily the patriotic susceptibilities of my Great Russian friends who have a pet theory on this subject, I should say that we have here two distinct nationalities, further apart from each other than the English and the Scotch. The differences are due, I believe, partly to ethnographical peculiarities and partly to historic conditions.

As it was the energetic Great Russian empire-builders and not the half-dreamy, half-astute, sympathetic descendants of the Free Cossacks that I wanted to study, I soon abandoned my idea of settling in the Holy City on the Dnieper, and chose Moscow as my point of observation; and here, during several years, I spent regularly some of the winter months.

The first few weeks of my stay in the ancient capital of the Tsars were spent in the ordinary manner of intelligent tourists. After mastering the contents of a guide-book I carefully inspected all the officially recognised objects of interest—the Kremlin, with its picturesque towers and six centuries of historical associations; the Cathedrals, containing the venerated tombs of martyrs, saints, and Tsars; the old churches, with their quaint, archaic, richly decorated Icons; the "Patriarchs' Treasury," rich in jewelled ecclesiastical vestments and vessels of silver and gold; the ancient and the modern palace; the Ethnological Museum, showing the costumes and physiognomy of all the various races in the Empire; the archæological collections, containing many objects that recall the barbaric splendour of old Muscovy; the picture-gallery, with Ivanof's gigantic picture, in which patriotic Russian critics discover occult merits that place it above anything that Western Europe has yet produced! Of course I climbed up to the top of the tall belfry which rejoices in the name of "Ivan the Great," and looked down on the "gilded domes"* of the churches, and bright green roofs of the houses, and, far away beyond these, the gently undulating country with the "Sparrow Hills," from which Napoleon is said, in cicerone language, to have "gazed upon the doomed city."

* Allowance must be made here for poetical licence. In reality, very few of the domes are gilt. The great majority of them are painted green, like the roofs of the houses.

Occasionally I walked about the bazaars in the hope of finding interesting specimens of genuine native art-industry, and was urgently invited to purchase every conceivable article which I did not want. At mid-day or in the evening I visited the most noted *traktirs*, and made the acquaintance of the caviar, sturgeons, sterlets, and other native delicacies for which these institutions are famous—deafened the while by the deep tones of the colossal barrel-organ, out of all proportion to the size of the room; and in order to see how the common people spent their evenings I looked in at some of the more modest *traktirs*, and gazed with wonder, not unmixed with fear, at the enormous quantity of weak tea which the inmates consumed.

Since these first weeks of my sojourn in Moscow more than thirty years have passed, and many of my early impressions have been blurred by time, but one scene remains deeply graven on my memory. It was Easter Eve, and I had gone with a friend to the Kremlin to witness the customary religious ceremonies. Though the rain was falling heavily, an immense number of people had assembled in and around the Cathedral of the Assumption. The crowd was of the most mixed kind. There stood the patient bearded muzhik in his well-worn sheepskin; the big, burly, self-satisfied merchant in his long black glossy *kaftan;* the noble with fashionable great-coat and umbrella; thinly clad old women shivering in the cold, and bright-eyed young damsels with their warm cloaks drawn closely round them; old men with long beard, wallet, and pilgrim's staff; and mischievous urchins with faces for the moment preternaturally demure. Each right hand, of old and young alike, held a lighted taper, and these myriads of flickering little flames produced a curious illumination, giving to the

surrounding buildings a weird picturesqueness which they do not possess in broad daylight. All stood patiently waiting for the announcement of the glad tidings: "He is risen!"

As midnight approached, the hum of voices gradually ceased, till, as the clock struck twelve, the deep-toned bell on "Ivan the Great" began to toll, and in answer to this signal all the bells in Moscow suddenly sent forth a merry peal. Each bell —and their name is legion—seemed frantically desirous of drowning its neighbour's voice, the solemn boom of the great one overhead mingling curiously with the sharp, fussy "ting-a-ting-ting" of diminutive rivals. If demons dwell in Moscow and dislike bell-ringing, as is generally supposed, then there must have been at that moment a general stampede of the powers of darkness such as is described by Milton in his poem on the Nativity; and as if this deafening din were not enough, big guns were fired in rapid succession from a battery of artillery close at hand! The noise seemed to stimulate the religious enthusiasm, and the general excitement had a wonderful effect on a Russian friend who accompanied me. When in his normal condition, that gentleman was a quiet, un-demonstrative person, devoted to science, an ardent adherent of Western civilisation in general and of Darwinism in particular, and a thorough sceptic with regard to all forms of religious belief; but the influence of the surroundings was too much for his philosophical equanimity. For a moment his orthodox Moscovite soul awoke from its sceptical, cosmopolitan lethargy. After crossing himself repeatedly—an act of devotion which I had never before seen him perform—he grasped my arm, and pointing to the crowd, said in an exultant tone of voice, "Look there! There is a sight that you can see nowhere but in the

'White-stone City.'* Are not the Russians a religious people?"

To this unexpected question I gave a monosyllabic assent, and refrained from disturbing my friend's new-born enthusiasm by any discordant note; but I must confess that this sudden outburst of deafening noise and the dazzling light aroused in my heretical breast feelings of a warlike rather than a religious kind. For a moment I could imagine myself in ancient Moscow, and could fancy the people being called out to repel a Tartar horde already thundering at the gates!

The service lasted two or three hours, and terminated with the curious ceremony of blessing the Easter cakes, which were ranged—each one with a lighted taper stuck in it—in long rows outside of the cathedral. A not less curious custom practised at this season is that of exchanging kisses of fraternal love. Theoretically one ought to embrace and be embraced by all present—indicating thereby that all are brethren in Christ—but the refinements of modern life have made innovations in the practice, and most people confine their salutations to their friends and acquaintances. When two friends meet during that night or on the following day, the one says, "Christós voskrés!" ("Christ hath risen!"); and the other replies, "Vo ístinê voskrés!" ("In truth He hath risen!"). They then kiss each other three times on the right and left cheek alternately. The custom is more or less observed in all classes of society, and the Emperor himself conforms to it.

This reminds me of an anecdote which is related of the Emperor Nicholas I., tending to show that he was not so devoid of kindly human feelings as his

* Bêlokâmenny, meaning "of white stone," is one of the popular names of Moscow.

imperial and imperious exterior suggested. On coming out of his cabinet one Easter morning, he addressed to the soldier who was mounting guard at the door the ordinary words of salutation, "Christ hath risen!" and received, instead of the ordinary reply, a flat contradiction—"Not at all, your Imperial Majesty!" Astounded by such an unexpected answer—for no one ventured to dissent from Nicholas even in the most guarded and respectful terms—he instantly demanded an explanation. The soldier, trembling at his own audacity, explained that he was a Jew, and could not conscientiously admit the fact of the resurrection. This boldness for conscience' sake so pleased the Tsar that he gave the man a handsome Easter present.

Quarter of a century after the Easter Eve above mentioned—or, to be quite accurate, on the 26th of May, 1896—I again find myself in the Kremlin on the occasion of a great religious ceremony—a ceremony which shows that "the White-stone City" on the Moskvá is still in some respects the capital of Holy Russia. This time my post of observation is inside the cathedral, which is artistically draped with purple hangings, and crowded with the most distinguished personages of the Empire, all arrayed in gorgeous apparel—Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses, Imperial Highnesses and High Excellencies, Metropolitans and Archbishops, Senators and Councillors of State, Generals and Court dignitaries. In the centre of the building, on a high, richly decorated platform, sits the Emperor with his Imperial Consort, and his mother, the widowed Consort of Alexander III. Though Nicholas II. has not the colossal stature which has distinguished so many of the Románofs, he is well built, holds himself erect, and shows a quiet dignity in his movements; while his face, which resembles that of his cousin, the Prince of Wales,

wears a kindly, sympathetic expression. The Empress looks even more than usually beautiful, in a low dress cut in the ancient fashion, her thick brown hair, dressed most simply without jewellery or other ornaments, falling in two long ringlets over her white shoulders. For the moment, her attire is much simpler than that of the Empress Dowager, who wears a diamond crown, and a great mantle of gold brocade, lined and edged with ermine, the long train displaying in bright-coloured embroidery the heraldic double-headed eagle of the Imperial arms.

Each of these august personages sits on a throne of curious workmanship, consecrated by ancient historic associations. That of the Emperor, the gift of a Shah of Persia to Ivan the Terrible, and commonly called the Throne of Tsar Michael, the founder of the Románof dynasty, is covered with gold plaques, and studded with hundreds of big, roughly cut precious stones, mostly rubies, emeralds, and turquoises. Of still older date is the throne of the young Empress, for it was given by Pope Paul II. to Tsar Ivan III., grandfather of the Terrible, on the occasion of his marriage with a niece of the last Byzantine Emperor. More recent but not less curious is that of the Empress Dowager. It is the throne of Tsar Alexis, the father of Peter the Great, covered with countless and priceless diamonds, rubies, and pearls, and surmounted by an Imperial eagle of solid gold, together with golden statuettes of St. Peter and St. Nicholas, the miracle-worker. Over each throne is a canopy of purple velvet fringed with gold, out of which rise stately plumes representing the national colours.

Their Majesties have come hither, in accordance with time-honoured custom, to be crowned in this old Cathedral of the Assumption, the central point of the Kremlin, within a stone-throw of the Cathedral of the

Archangel Michael, in which lie the remains of the old Grand Dukes and Tsars of Muscovy. Already the Emperor has read aloud, in a clear, unfaltering voice, from a richly bound parchment folio, held by the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, the Orthodox creed; and his Eminence, after invoking on his Majesty the blessing of the Holy Spirit, has performed the mystic rite of placing his hands in the form of a cross on the Imperial forehead. Thus all is ready for the most important part of the solemn ceremony. Standing erect, the Emperor doffs his small diadem and puts on with his own hands the great diamond crown, offered respectfully by the Metropolitan; then he reseats himself on his throne, holding in his right hand the Sceptre and in his left the Orb of Dominion. After sitting thus in state for a few minutes, he stands up and proceeds to crown his august spouse, kneeling before him. First he touches her forehead with his own crown, and then he places on her head a smaller one, which is immediately attached to her hair by four ladies-in-waiting, dressed in the old Muscovite Court costume. At the same time her Majesty is invested with a mantle of heavy gold brocade, similar to those of the Emperor and Empress Dowager, lined and bordered with ermine.

Thus crowned and robed, their Majesties sit in state, while a proto-deacon reads, in a loud, stentorian voice, the long list of sonorous hereditary titles belonging of right to the Imperator and Autocrat of all the Russias, and the choir chants a prayer invoking long life and happiness—"Many years! Many years! Many years!"—on the high and mighty possessor of the titles aforesaid. And now begins the Mass, celebrated with a pomp and magnificence that can be witnessed only once or twice in a generation. Sixty gorgeously robed ecclesiastical dignitaries of the

highest orders fulfil their various functions with due solemnity and unction; but the magnificence of the vestments and the pomp of the ceremonial are soon forgotten in the exquisite solemnising music, as the deep double-bass tones of the adult singers in the background—carefully selected for the occasion in all parts of the Empire—peal forth as from a great organ, and blend marvellously with the clear, soft, gentle notes of the red-robed chorister boys in front of the Iconostase.

Listening with intense emotion, I involuntarily recall to mind Fra Angelico's pictures of angelic choirs, and cannot help thinking that the pious old Florentine, whose soul was attuned to all that was sacred and beautiful, must have heard in imagination such music as this. So strong is the impression that the subsequent details of the long ceremony, including the anointing with the holy chrism, fail to engrave themselves on my memory. One incident, however, remains; and if it had happened in an earlier and more superstitious age it would doubtless have been chronicled as an omen full of significance. As the Emperor is on the point of descending from the daïs, duly crowned and anointed, a straggling ray of sunshine steals through one of the narrow upper windows, and, traversing the dimly lit edifice, falls full on the Imperial crown, lighting up for a moment the great mass of diamonds with a hundredfold brilliance.

In a detailed account of the Coronation which I wrote on leaving the Kremlin, I find the following: "The magnificent ceremony is at an end, and now Nicholas II. is the crowned Emperor and anointed Autocrat of all the Russias. May the cares of Empire rest lightly on him! That must be the earnest prayer of every loyal subject and every sincere well-wisher, for of all living mortals he is perhaps the one who has

been entrusted by Providence with the greatest power and the greatest responsibilities." In writing those words I did not foresee how heavy his responsibilities would one day weigh upon him, when his Empire would be sorely tried by foreign war and internal discontent.

One more of these old Moscow reminiscences, and I have done. A day or two after the Coronation I saw the Khodinskoye Polye, a great plain in the outskirts of Moscow, strewn with hundreds of corpses! During the previous night enormous crowds from the city and the surrounding districts had collected here in order to receive at sunrise, by the Tsar's command, a little memento of the coronation ceremony, in the form of a packet containing a metal cup and a few eatables; and as day dawned, in their anxiety to get near the row of booths from which the distribution was to be made, about two thousand had been crushed to death. It was a sight more horrible than a battlefield, because among the dead were a large proportion of women and children, terribly mutilated in the struggle. Altogether, "a sight to shudder at, not to see!"

To return to the remark of my friend in the Kremlin on Easter Eve, the Russians in general, and the Moscovites in particular, as the quintessence of all that is Russian, are certainly a religious people, but their piety sometimes finds modes of expression which rather shock the Protestant mind. As an instance of these, I may mention the domiciliary visits of the Iberian Madonna. This celebrated Icon, for reasons which I have never heard satisfactorily explained, is held in peculiar veneration by the Moscovites, and occupies in popular estimation a position analogous to the tutelary deities of ancient pagan cities. Thus when Napoleon was about to enter the

city in 1812, the populace clamorously called upon the Metropolitan to take the Madonna, and lead them out armed with hatchets against the hosts of the infidel; and when the Tsar visits Moscow, he generally drives straight from the railway-station to the little chapel where the Icon resides—near one of the entrances to the Kremlin—and there offers up a short prayer. Every Orthodox Russian, as he passes this chapel, uncovers and crosses himself, and whenever a religious service is performed in it there is always a considerable group of worshippers.

Some of the richer inhabitants, however, are not content with thus performing their devotions in public before the Icon. They like to have it from time to time in their houses, and the ecclesiastical authorities think fit to humour this strange fancy. Accordingly every morning the Iberian Madonna may be seen driving about the city from one house to another in a carriage and four! The carriage may be at once recognised, not from any peculiarity in its structure, for it is an ordinary close carriage such as may be obtained at livery stables, but by the fact that the coachman sits bare-headed, and all the people in the street uncover and cross themselves as it passes. Arrived at the house to which it has been invited, the Icon is carried through all the rooms, and in the principal apartment a short religious service is performed before it. As it is being brought in or taken away, female servants may sometimes be seen to kneel on the floor so that it may be carried over them. During its absence from its chapel it is replaced by a copy not easily distinguishable from the original, and thus the devotions of the faithful and the flow of pecuniary contributions do not suffer interruption. These contributions, together with the sums paid for the domiciliary visits, amount to a considerable yearly sum,

and go—if I am rightly informed—to swell the revenues of the Metropolitan.

A single drive or stroll through Moscow will suffice to convince the traveller, even if he knows nothing of Russian history, that the city is not, like its modern rival on the Neva, the artificial creation of a far-seeing, self-willed autocrat, but rather a natural product which has grown up slowly and been modified according to the constantly changing wants of the population. A few of the streets have been Europeanised—in all except the paving, which is everywhere execrably Asiatic—to suit the tastes of those who have adopted European culture, but the great majority of them still retain much of their ancient character and primitive irregularity. As soon as we diverge from the principal thoroughfares, we find one-storeyed houses—some of them still of wood—which appear to have been transported bodily from the country, with courtyard, garden, stables, and other appurtenances. The whole is no doubt a little compressed, for land has here a certain value, but the character is in no way changed, and we have some difficulty in believing that we are not in the suburbs but near the centre of a great town. There is nothing that can by any possibility be called street architecture. Though there is unmistakable evidence of the streets having been laid out according to a preconceived plan, many of them show clearly that in their infancy they had a wayward will of their own, and bend to the right or left without any topographical justification.

The houses, too, display considerable individuality of character, having evidently during the course of their construction paid no attention to their neighbours. Hence we find no regularly built terraces, crescents, or squares. There is, it is true, a double circle of

boulevards, but the houses which flank them have none of that regularity which we commonly associate with the term. Dilapidated buildings which in West-European cities would hide themselves in some narrow lane or back slum here stand composedly in the face of day by the side of a palatial residence, without having the least consciousness of the incongruity of their position, just as the unsophisticated muzhik in his unsavoury sheepskin can stand in the midst of a crowd of well-dressed people without feeling at all awkward or uncomfortable.

All this incongruity, however, is speedily disappearing. Moscow has become the centre of a great network of railways, and the commercial and industrial capital of the Empire. Already her rapidly increasing population has nearly reached a million.* The value of land and property is being doubled and trebled, and building speculations, with the aid of credit institutions of various kinds, are being carried on with feverish rapidity. Well may the men of the old school complain that the world is turned upside down, and regret the old times of traditional somnolence and comfortable routine! Those good old times are gone now, never to return. The ancient capital, which long gloried in its past historical associations, now glories in its present commercial prosperity, and looks forward with confidence to the future. Even the Slavophils, the obstinate champions of the ultra-Moscovite spirit, have changed with the times, and descended to the level of ordinary prosaic life. These men, who formerly spent years in seeking to determine the place of Moscow in the past and future history of humanity, have—to their honour be it said—become in these latter days town-councillors, and have devoted much of their time to

* According to the census of 1897 it was 988,610.

devising ways and means of improving the drainage and the street-paving! But I am anticipating in a most unjustifiable way. I ought first to tell the reader who the early Slavophils were, and why they sought to correct the commonly received conceptions of universal history.

The reader may have heard of the Slavophils as a set of fanatics who, about half a century ago, were wont to go about in what they considered the ancient Russian costume, who wore beards in defiance of Peter the Great's celebrated ukaz and Nicholas I.'s clearly expressed wish anent shaving, who gloried in Moscovite barbarism, and had solemnly "sworn a feud" against European civilisation and enlightenment. By the tourists of the time who visited Moscow they were regarded as among the most noteworthy lions of the place, and were commonly depicted in not very flattering colours. At the beginning of the Crimean War they were among the extreme Chauvinists who urged the necessity of planting the Greek cross on the desecrated dome of St. Sophia in Constantinople, and hoped to see the Emperor proclaimed "Panslavonic Tsar," and after the termination of the war they were frequently accused of inventing Turkish atrocities, stirring up discontent among the Slavonic subjects of the Sultan, and secretly plotting for the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire. All this was known to me before I went to Russia, and I had consequently invested the Slavophils with a halo of romance. Shortly after my arrival in St. Petersburg I heard something more which tended to increase my interest in them—they had caused, I was told, great trepidation among the highest official circles by petitioning the Emperor to resuscitate a certain ancient institution, called a *Zemski Sobór*, which might be made to serve the purposes of a

Parliament! This threw a new light upon them: under the disguise of archæological Conservatives they were evidently aiming at important Liberal reforms.

As a foreigner and a heretic, I expected a very cold and distant reception from these uncompromising champions of Russian nationality and the Orthodox faith; but in this I was agreeably disappointed. By all of them I was received in the most amiable and friendly way, and I soon discovered that my preconceived ideas of them were very far from the truth. Instead of wild fanatics I found quiet, extremely intelligent, highly educated gentlemen, speaking foreign languages with ease and elegance, and deeply imbued with that Western culture which they were commonly supposed to despise. And this first impression was amply confirmed by subsequent experience during several years of friendly intercourse. They always showed themselves men of earnest character and strong convictions, but they never said or did anything that could justify the appellation of fanatics. Like all philosophical theorists, they often allowed their logic to blind them to facts, but their reasonings were very plausible—so plausible, indeed, that, had I been a Russian, they would have almost persuaded me to be a Slavophil, at least during the time they were talking to me.

To understand their doctrine we must know something of its origin and development.

The origin of the Slavophil sentiment, which must not be confounded with the Slavophil doctrine, is to be sought in the latter half of the seventeenth century, when the Tsars of Muscovy were introducing innovations in Church and State. These innovations were profoundly displeasing to the people. A large portion of the lower classes, as I have related in a previous chapter, sought refuge in Old Ritualism or

sectarianism, and imagined that Tsar Peter, who called himself by the heretical title of "Imperator," was an emanation of the Evil Principle. The nobles did not go quite so far. They remained members of the official Church, and restricted themselves to hinting that Peter was the son, not of Satan, but of a German surgeon—a lineage which, according to the conceptions of the time, was a little less objectionable; but most of them were very hostile to the changes, and complained bitterly of the new burdens which these changes entailed. Under Peter's immediate successors, when not only the principles of administration but also many of the administrators were German, this hostility greatly increased.

So long as the innovations appeared only in the official activity of the Government, the patriotic, conservative spirit was obliged to keep silence; but when the foreign influence spread to the social life of the Court aristocracy, the opposition began to find a literary expression. In the time of Catherine II., when Gallomania was at its height in Court circles, comedies and satirical journals ridiculed those who, "blinded by some externally brilliant gifts of foreigners, not only prefer foreign countries to their native land, but even despise their fellow-countrymen, and think that a Russian ought to borrow all—even personal character. As if Nature, arranging all things with such wisdom, and bestowing on all regions the gifts and customs which are appropriate to the climate, had been so unjust as to refuse to the Russians a character of their own! As if she condemned them to wander over all regions, and to adopt by bits the various customs of various nations, in order to compose out of the mixture a new character appropriate to no nation whatever!" Numerous passages of this kind might be quoted, attacking the "monkeyism"

and "parrotism" of those who indiscriminately adopted foreign manners and customs—those who

> "Sauntered Europe round,
> And gathered ev'ry vice in ev'ry ground."

Sometimes the terms and metaphors employed were more forcible than refined. One satirical journal, for instance, relates an amusing story about certain little Russian pigs that went to foreign lands to enlighten their understanding, and came back to their country full-grown swine. The national pride was wounded by the thought that Russians could be called "clever apes who feed on foreign intelligence," and many writers, stung by such reproaches, fell into the opposite extreme, discovering unheard-of excellences in the Russian mind and character, and vociferously decrying everything foreign in order to place these imagined excellences in a stronger light by contrast. Even when they recognised that their country was not quite so advanced in civilisation as certain other nations, they congratulated themselves on the fact, and invented by way of justification an ingenious theory, which was afterwards developed by the Slavophils. "The nations of the West," they said, "began to live before us, and are consequently more advanced than we are; but we have on that account no reason to envy them, for we can profit by their errors, and avoid those deep-rooted evils from which they are suffering. He who has just been born is happier than he who is dying."

Thus, we see, a patriotic reaction against the introduction of foreign institutions and the inordinate admiration of foreign culture already existed in Russia more than a century ago. It did not, however, take the form of a philosophical theory till a much later period, when a similar movement was going on in various countries of Western Europe.

After the overthrow of the great Napoleonic Empire a reaction against cosmopolitanism took place and a romantic enthusiasm for nationality spread over Europe like an epidemic. Blind enthusiastic patriotism became the fashionable sentiment of the time. Each nation took to admiring itself complacently, to praising its own character and achievements, and to idealising its historical and mythical past. National peculiarities, "local colour," ancient customs, traditional superstitions—in short, everything that a nation believed to be specially and exclusively its own—now raised an enthusiasm similar to that which had been formerly excited by cosmopolitan conceptions founded on the law of Nature. The movement produced good and evil results. In serious minds it led to a deep and conscientious study of history, national literature, popular mythology, and the like; whilst in frivolous, inflammable spirits it gave birth merely to a torrent of patriotic fervour and rhetorical exaggeration. The Slavophils were the Russian representatives of this nationalistic reaction, and displayed both its serious and its frivolous elements.

Among the most important products of this movement in Germany was the Hegelian theory of universal history. According to Hegel's views, which were generally accepted by those who occupied themselves with philosophical questions, universal history was described as "Progress in the consciousness of freedom" (*Fortschritt im Bewusstsein der Freiheit*). In each period of the world's history, it was explained, some one nation or race had been entrusted with the high mission of enabling the Absolute Reason, or Weltgeist, to express itself in objective existence, while the other nations and races had for the time no metaphysical justification for their existence, and no higher duty than to imitate slavishly the favoured

rival in which the Weltgeist had for the moment chosen to incorporate itself. The incarnation had taken place first in the Eastern Monarchies, then in Greece, next in Rome, and lastly in the Germanic race; and it was generally assumed, if not openly asserted, that this mystical Metempsychosis of the Absolute was now at an end. The cycle of existence was complete. In the Germanic peoples the Weltgeist had found its highest and final expression.

Russians in general knew nothing about German philosophy, and were consequently not in any way affected by these ideas, but there was in Moscow a small group of young men who ardently studied German literature and metaphysics, and they were much shocked by Hegel's views. Ever since the brilliant reign of Catherine II., who had defeated the Turks and had dreamed of resuscitating the Byzantine Empire, and especially since the memorable events of 1812–15, when Alexander I. appeared as the liberator of enthralled Europe and the arbiter of her destinies, Russians were firmly convinced that their country was destined to play a most important part in human history. Already the great Russian historian Karamzín had declared that henceforth Clio must be silent, or accord to Russia a prominent place in the history of the nations. Now, by the Hegelian theory, the whole of the Slav race was left out in the cold, with no high mission, with no new truths to divulge, with nothing better to do, in fact, than to imitate the Germans.

The patriotic philosophers of Moscow could not, of course, adopt this view. Whilst accepting the fundamental principles, they declared the theory to be incomplete. The incompleteness lay in the assumption that humanity had already entered on the final stages of its development. The Teutonic nations

were perhaps for the moment the leaders in the march of civilisation, but there was no reason to suppose that they would always retain that privileged position. On the contrary, there were already symptoms that their ascendency was drawing to a close. "Western Europe," it was said, "presents a strange, saddening spectacle. Opinion struggles against opinion, power against power, throne against throne. Science, Art, and Religion, the three chief motors of social life, have lost their force. We venture to make an assertion which to many at present may seen strange, but which will be in a few years only too evident: Western Europe is on the high road to ruin! We Russians, on the contrary, are young and fresh, and have taken no part in the crimes of Europe. We have a great mission to fulfil. Our name is already inscribed on the tablets of victory, and now we have to inscribe our spirit in the history of the human mind. A higher kind of victory—the victory of Science, Art, and Faith—awaits us on the ruins of tottering Europe!"*

This conclusion was supported by arguments drawn from history—or, at least, what was believed to be history. The European world was represented as being composed of two hemispheres—the Eastern, or Græco-Slavonic, on the one hand, and the Western, or Roman Catholic and Protestant, on the other. These two hemispheres, it was said, are distinguished from each other by many fundamental characteristics. In both of them Christianity formed originally the basis of civilisation, but in the West it became distorted and gave a false direction to the intellectual development. By placing the logical reason of the learned above the conscience of the whole Church, Roman Catholicism produced Protestantism, which proclaimed

* These words were written by Prince Odóefski.

the right of private judgment and consequently became split up into innumerable sects. The dry, logical spirit which was thus fostered created a purely intellectual, one-sided philosophy, which must end in pure scepticism, by blinding men to those great truths which lie above the sphere of reasoning and logic. The Græco-Slavonic world, on the contrary, having accepted Christianity not from Rome, but from Byzantium, received pure Orthodoxy and true enlightenment, and was thus saved alike from Papal tyranny and from Protestant freethinking. Hence the Eastern Christians have preserved faithfully not only the ancient dogmas, but also the ancient spirit of Christianity—that spirit of pious humility, resignation, and brotherly love which Christ taught by precept and example. If they have not yet a philosophy, they will create one, and it will far surpass all previous systems; for in the writings of the Greek Fathers are to be found the germs of a broader, a deeper, and a truer philosophy than the dry, meagre rationalism of the West—a philosophy founded not on the logical faculty alone, but on the broader basis of human nature as a whole.

The fundamental characteristics of the Græco-Slavonic world—so runs the Slavophil theory—have been displayed in the history of Russia. Thoughout Western Christendom the principle of individual judgment and reckless individual egotism have exhausted the social forces and brought society to the verge of incurable anarchy and inevitable dissolution, whereas the social and political history of Russia has been harmonious and peaceful. It presents no struggles between the different social classes, and no conflicts between Church and State. All the factors have worked in unison, and the development has been guided by the spirit of pure Orthodoxy. But in this

harmonious picture there is one big, ugly black spot —Peter, falsely styled "the Great," and his so-called reforms. Instead of following the wise policy of his ancestors, Peter rejected the national traditions and principles, and applied to his country, which belonged to the Eastern world, the principles of Western civilisation. His reforms, conceived in a foreign spirit, and elaborated by men who did not possess the national instincts, were forced upon the nation against its will, and the result was precisely what might have been expected. The "broad Slavonic nature" could not be controlled by institutions which had been invented by narrow-minded, pedantic German bureaucrats, and, like another Samson, it pulled down the building in which foreign legislators sought to confine it.

The attempt to introduce foreign culture had a still worse effect. The upper classes, charmed and dazzled by the glare and glitter of Western science, threw themselves impulsively on the newly found treasures, and thereby condemned themselves to moral slavery and intellectual sterility. Fortunately—and herein lay one of the fundamental principles of the Slavophil doctrine—the imported civilisation had not at all infected the common people. Through all the changes which the Administration and the Noblesse underwent the peasantry preserved religiously in their hearts "the living legacy of antiquity," the essence of Russian nationality, "a clear spring welling up living waters, hidden and unknown, but powerful."* To recover this lost legacy by studying the character, customs, and institutions of the peasantry, to lead the educated classes back to the path from which they had strayed, and to re-establish that intellectual and moral

* This was one of the favourite themes of Khomiakóf, the Slavophil poet and theologian.

unity which had been disturbed by the foreign importations—such was the task which the Slavophils proposed to themselves.

Deeply imbued with that romantic spirit which distorted all the intellectual activity of the time, the Slavophils often indulged in the wildest exaggerations, condemning everything foreign and praising everything Russian. When in this mood they saw in the history of the West nothing but violence, slavery, and egotism, and in that of their own country free-will, liberty, and peace. The fact that Russia did not possess free political institutions was adduced as a precious fruit of that spirit of Christian resignation and self-sacrifice which places the Russian at such an immeasurable height above the proud, selfish European; and because Russia possessed few of the comforts and conveniences of common life, the West was accused of having made comfort its God!

We need not, however, dwell on these puerilities, which only gained for their authors the reputation of being ignorant, narrow-minded men, imbued with a hatred of enlightenment and desirous of leading their country back to its primitive barbarism. What the Slavophils really condemned, at least in their calmer moments, was not European culture, but the uncritical, indiscriminate adoption of it by their countrymen. Their tirades against foreign culture must appear excusable when we remember that many Russians of the upper ranks could speak and write French more correctly than their native language, and that even the great national poet Pushkin was not ashamed to confess—what was not true, and a mere piece of affectation—that "the language of Europe" was more familiar to him than his mother-tongue!

The Slavophil doctrine, though it made a great

noise in the world, never found many adherents. The society of St. Petersburg regarded it as one of those harmless provincial eccentricities which are always to be found in Moscow. In the modern capital, with its foreign name, its streets and squares on the European model, its palaces and churches in the Renaissance style, and its passionate love of everything French, any attempt to resuscitate the old Boyaric times would have been eminently ridiculous. Indeed, hostility to St. Petersburg and to "the Petersburg period of Russian history" is one of the characteristic traits of genuine Slavophilism. In Moscow the doctrine found a more appropriate home. There the ancient churches, with the tombs of Grand Princes and holy martyrs, the palace in which the Tsars of Muscovy had lived, the Kremlin which had resisted—not always successfully—the attacks of savage Tartars and heretical Poles, the venerable Icons that had many a time protected the people from danger, the block of masonry from which, on solemn occasions, the Tsar and the Patriarch had addressed the assembled multitude—these, and a hundred other monuments sanctified by tradition, have kept alive in the popular memory some vague remembrance of the olden time, and are still capable of awakening antiquarian patriotism.

The inhabitants, too, have preserved something of the old Muscovite character. Whilst successive sovereigns have been striving to make the country a progressive European empire, Moscow has remained the home of passive conservatism and an asylum for the discontented, especially for the disappointed aspirants to Imperial favour. Abandoned by the modern Emperors, she can glory in her ancient Tsars. But even the Moscovites were not prepared to accept the Slavophil doctrine in the

extreme form which it assumed, and were not a little perplexed by the eccentricities of those who professed it. Plain, sensible people, though they might be proud of being citizens of the ancient capital, and might thoroughly enjoy a joke at the expense of St. Petersburg, could not understand a little coterie of enthusiasts who sought neither official rank nor decorations, who slighted many of the conventionalities of the higher classes to which by birth and education they belonged, who loved to fraternise with the common people, and who occasionally dressed in the national costume which had been discarded by the nobles since the time of Peter the Great.

The Slavophils thus remained merely a small literary party, which probably did not count more than a dozen members, but their influence was out of all proportion to their numbers. They preached successfully the doctrine that the historical development of Russia has been peculiar, that her present social and political organisation is radically different from that of the countries of Western Europe, and that consequently the social and political evils from which she suffers are not to be cured by the remedies which have proved efficacious in France and Germany. These truths, which now appear commonplace, were formerly by no means generally recognised, and the Slavophils deserve credit for directing attention to them. Besides this, they helped to awaken in the upper classes a lively sympathy with the poor, oppressed, and despised peasantry. So long as the Emperor Nicholas lived they had to confine themselves to a purely literary activity; but during the great reforms initiated by his successor, Alexander II., they descended into the arena of practical politics, and played a most useful and honourable part in the emancipation of the serfs. In the new local self-

government, too—the Zemstvo and the new municipal institutions—they laboured energetically and to good purpose. Of all this I shall have occasion to speak more fully in future chapters.

But what of their Panslavist aspirations? By their theory they were constrained to pay attention to the Slav race as a whole, but they were more Russian than Slav, and more Moscovite than Russian. The Panslavist element consequently occupied a secondary place in Slavophil doctrine. Though they did much to stimulate popular sympathy with the Southern Slavs, and always cherished the hope that the Serbs, Bulgarians, and cognate Slav nationalities would one day throw off the bondage of the German and the Turk, they never proposed any elaborate project for the solution of the Eastern Question. So far as I was able to gather from their conversation, they seemed to favour the idea of a grand Slavonic Confederation, in which the hegemony would, of course, belong to Russia. In ordinary times the only steps which they took for the realisation of this idea consisted in contributing money for schools and churches among the Slav population of Austria and Turkey, and in educating young Bulgarians in Russia. During the Cretan insurrection they sympathised warmly with the insurgents as co-religionists, but afterwards—especially during the crisis of the Eastern Question which culminated in the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin (1878)—their Hellenic sympathies cooled, because the Greeks showed that they had political aspirations inconsistent with the designs of Russia, and that they were likely to be the rivals rather than the allies of the Slavs in the struggle for the Sick Man's inheritance.

Since the time when I was living in Moscow in constant intercourse with the leading Slavophils more

than a quarter of a century has passed, and of those with whom I spent so many pleasant evenings, discussing the past history and future destinies of the Slav races, not one remains alive. All the great prophets of the old Slavophil doctrine—Juri Samárin, Prince Tcherkaski, Ivan Aksákof, Kosheléff—have departed without leaving behind them any genuine disciples. The present generation of Moscovite *frondeurs*, who continue to rail against Western Europe and the pedantic officialism of St. Petersburg, are of a more modern and less academic type. Their philippics are directed not against Peter the Great and his reforms, but rather against recent Ministers of Foreign Affairs, who are thought to have shown themselves too subservient to foreign Powers, and against M. Witte, the late Minister of Finance, who is accused of favouring the introduction of foreign capital and enterprise, and of sacrificing to unhealthy industrial development the interests of the agricultural classes. These laments and diatribes are allowed free expression in private conversation and in the Press, but they do not influence very deeply the policy of the Government or the natural course of events; for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to cultivate friendly relations with the Cabinets of the West, and Moscow is rapidly becoming, by the force of economic conditions, the great industrial and commercial centre of the Empire.

The administrative and bureaucratic centre—if anything on the frontier of a country can be called its centre—has long been, and is likely to remain, Peter's stately city at the mouth of the Neva, to which I now invite the reader to accompany me.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ST. PETERSBURG AND EUROPEAN INFLUENCE.

St. Petersburg and Berlin—Big Houses—The "Lions"—Peter the Great—His Aims and Policy—The German *Régime*—Nationalist Reaction—French Influence—Consequent Intellectual Sterility—Influence of the Sentimental School—Hostility to Foreign Influences—A New Period of Literary Importation—Secret Societies—The Catastrophe—The Age of Nicholas—A Terrible War on Parnassus—Decline of Romanticism and Transcendentalism—Gógol—The Revolutionary Agitation of 1848—New Reaction—Conclusion.

FROM whatever side the traveller approaches St. Petersburg, unless he goes thither by sea, he must traverse several hundred miles of forest and morass, presenting few traces of human habitation or agriculture. This fact adds powerfully to the first impression which the city makes on his mind. In the midst of a waste howling wilderness, he suddenly comes on a magnificent artificial oasis.

Of all the great European cities, the one that most resembles the capital of the Tsars is Berlin. Both are built on perfectly level ground; both have wide, regularly arranged streets; in both there is a general look of stiffness and symmetry which suggests military discipline and German bureaucracy. But there is at least one profound difference. Though Berlin is said by geographers to be built on the Spree, we might live a long time in the city without noticing the sluggish little stream on which the name of a river has been undeservedly conferred. St. Petersburg, on the contrary, is built on a magnificent river, which forms the main feature of the place. By its breadth, and by the enormous volume of its clear, blue, cold water, the Neva is certainly one of the noblest rivers of Europe.

A few miles before reaching the Gulf of Finland it breaks up into several streams and forms a delta. It is here that St. Petersburg stands.

Like the river, everything in St. Petersburg is on a colossal scale. The streets, the squares, the palaces, the public buildings, the churches, whatever may be their defects, have at least the attribute of greatness, and seem to have been designed for the countless generations to come, rather than for the practical wants of the present inhabitants. In this respect the city well represents the Empire of which it is the capital. Even the private houses are built in enormous blocks and divided into many separate apartments. Those built for the working classes sometimes contain, I am assured, more than a thousand inhabitants. How many cubic feet of air is allowed to each person I do not know; not so many, I fear, as is recommended by the most advanced sanitary authorities.

For a detailed description of the city I must refer the reader to the guide-books. Among its numerous monuments, of which the Russians are justly proud, I confess that the one which interested me most was neither St. Isaac's Cathedral, with its majestic gilded dome, its colossal monolithic columns of red granite, and its gaudy interior; nor the Hermitage, with its magnificent collection of Dutch pictures; nor the gloomy, frowning fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, containing the tombs of the Emperors. These and other "sights" may deserve all the praise which enthusiastic tourists have lavished upon them, but what made a far deeper impression on me was the little wooden house in which Peter the Great lived whilst his future capital was being built. In its style and arrangement it looks more like the hut of a navvy than the residence of a Tsar, but it was quite in keeping with the character of the illustrious man who occupied

it. Peter could and did occasionally work like a navvy without feeling that his Imperial dignity was thereby impaired. When he determined to build a new capital on a Finnish marsh, inhabited chiefly by wildfowl, he did not content himself with exercising his autocratic power in a comfortable arm-chair. Like the old Greek gods, he went down from his Olympus, and took his place in the ranks of ordinary mortals, superintending the work with his own eyes, and taking part in it with his own hands. If he was as arbitrary and oppressive as any of the pyramid building Pharaohs, he could at least say in self-justification that he did not spare himself any more than his people, but exposed himself freely to the discomforts and dangers under which thousands of his fellow-labourers succumbed.

In reading the account of Peter's life, written in part by his own pen, we can easily understand how the piously Conservative section of his subjects failed to recognise in him the legitimate successor of the orthodox Tsars. The old Tsars had been men of grave, pompous demeanour, deeply imbued with the consciousness of their semi-religious dignity. Living habitually in Moscow or its immediate neighbourhood, they spent their time in attending long religious services, in consulting with their *Boyárs*, in being present at ceremonious hunting-parties, in visiting the monasteries, and in holding edifying conversations with ecclesiastical dignitaries or revered ascetics. If they undertook a journey, it was probably to make a pilgrimage to some holy shrine; and, whether in Moscow or elsewhere, they were always protected from contact with ordinary humanity by a formidable barricade of court ceremonial. In short, they combined the characters of a Christian monk and of an Oriental potentate.

Peter was a man of an entirely different type, and played in the calm, dignified, orthodox ceremonious world of Moscow the part of the bull in the china shop, outraging ruthlessly and wantonly all the time-honoured traditional conceptions of propriety and etiquette. Utterly regardless of public opinion and popular prejudices, he swept away the old formalities, avoided ceremonies of all kinds, scoffed at ancient usage, preferred foreign secular books to edifying conversations, chose profane heretics as his boon companions, travelled in foreign countries, dressed in heretical costume, defaced the image of God and put his soul in jeopardy by shaving off his beard, compelled his nobles to dress and shave like himself, rushed about the Empire as if goaded on by the demon of unrest, employed his sacred hands in carpentering and other menial occupations, took part openly in the uproarious orgies of his foreign soldiery, and, in short, did everything that "the Lord's anointed" might reasonably be expected not to do. No wonder the Moscovites were scandalised by his conduct, and that some of them suspected he was not the Tsar at all, but Antichrist in disguise. And no wonder he felt the atmosphere of Moscow oppressive, and preferred living in the new capital which he had himself created.

His avowed object in building St. Petersburg was to have "a window by which the Russians might look into civilised Europe;" and well has the city fulfilled its purpose. From its foundation may be dated the European period of Russian history. Before Peter's time Russia belonged to Asia rather than to Europe, and was doubtless regarded by Englishmen and Frenchmen pretty much as we nowadays regard Bokhara or Kashgar; since that time she has formed an integral part of the European political system, and

her intellectual history has been but a reflection of the intellectual history of Western Europe, modified and coloured by national character and by peculiar local conditions.

When we speak of the intellectual history of a nation we generally mean in reality the intellectual history of the upper classes. With regard to Russia, more perhaps than with regard to any other country, this distinction must always carefully be borne in mind. Peter succeeded in forcing European civilisation on the nobles, but the people remained unaffected. The nation was, as it were, cleft in two, and with each succeeding generation the cleft has widened. Whilst the masses clung obstinately to their time-honoured customs and beliefs, the nobles came to look on the objects of popular veneration as the relics of a barbarous past, of which a civilised nation ought to be ashamed.

The intellectual movement inaugurated by Peter had a purely practical character. He was himself a thorough utilitarian, and perceived clearly that what his people needed was not theological or philosophical enlightenment, but plain practical knowledge suitable for the requirements of everyday life. He wanted neither theologians nor philosophers, but military and naval officers, administrators, artisans, miners, manufacturers, and merchants, and for this purpose he introduced secular technical education. For the young generation primary schools were founded, and for more advanced pupils the best foreign works on fortification, architecture, navigation, metallurgy, engineering and cognate subjects, were translated into the native tongue. Scientific men and cunning artificers were brought into the country, and young Russians were sent abroad to learn foreign languages and the useful arts. In a word, everything was done that

seemed likely to raise the Russians to the level of material well-being already attained by the more advanced nations.

We have here an important peculiarity in the intellectual development of Russia. In Western Europe the modern scientific spirit, being the natural offspring of numerous concomitant historical causes, was born in the natural way, and Society had, consequently, before giving birth to it, to endure the pains of pregnancy and the throes of prolonged labour. In Russia, on the contrary, this spirit appeared suddenly as an adult foreigner, adopted by a despotic paterfamilias. Thus Russia made the transition from mediæval to modern times without any violent struggle between the old and the new conceptions, such as had taken place in the West. The Church, effectually restrained from all active opposition by the Imperial power, preserved unmodified her ancient beliefs; whilst the nobles, casting their traditional conceptions and beliefs to the winds, marched forward unfettered on that path which their fathers and grandfathers had regarded as the direct road to perdition.

During the first part of Peter's reign Russia was not subjected to the exclusive influence of any one particular country. Thoroughly cosmopolitan in his sympathies, the great reformer, like the Japanese of the present day, was ready to borrow from any foreign nation—German, Dutch, Danish, or French—whatever seemed to him to suit his purpose. But soon the geographical proximity to Germany, the annexation of the Baltic Provinces in which the civilisation was German, and intermarriages between the Imperial family and various German dynasties, gave to German influence a decided preponderance. When the Empress Anne, Peter's niece, who had been Duchess of Courland, entrusted the whole administration of the

country to her favourite, Biron, the German influence became almost exclusive, and the Court, the official world, and the schools were Germanised.

The harsh, cruel, tyrannical rule of Biron produced a strong reaction, ending in a revolution, which raised to the throne the Princess Elizabeth, Peter's unmarried daughter, who had lived in retirement and neglect during the German *régime*. She was expected to rid the country of foreigners, and she did what she could to fulfil the expectations that were entertained of her. With loud protestations of patriotic feelings, she removed the Germans from all important posts, demanded that in future the members of the Academy should be chosen from among born Russians, and gave orders that the Russian youth should be carefully prepared for all kinds of official activity.

This attempt to throw off the German bondage did not lead to intellectual independence. During Peter's violent reforms Russia had ruthlessly thrown away her own historic past with whatever germs it contained, and now she possessed none of the elements of a genuine national culture. She was in the position of a fugitive who has escaped from slavery, and, finding himself in danger of starvation, looks about for a new master. The upper classes, who had acquired a taste for foreign civilisation, no sooner threw off everything German than they sought some other civilisation to put in its place. And they could not long hesitate in making a choice, for at that time all who thought of culture and refinement turned their eyes to Paris and Versailles. All that was most brilliant and refined was to be found at the Court of the French kings, under whose patronage the art and literature of the Renaissance had attained their highest development. Even Germany, which had resisted the ambitious designs of Louis XIV., imitated the

manners of his Court. Every petty German potentate strove to ape the pomp and dignity of the Grand Monarque; and the courtiers, affecting to look on everything German as rude and barbarous, adopted French fashions, and spoke a hybrid jargon which they considered much more elegant than the plain mother tongue. In a word, Gallomania had become the prevailing social epidemic of the time, and it could not fail to attack and metamorphose such a class as the Russian Noblesse, which possessed few stubborn deep-rooted national convictions.

At first the French influence was manifested chiefly in external forms—that is to say, in dress, manners, language, and upholstery—but gradually, and very rapidly after the accession of Catherine II., the friend of Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, it sank deeper. Every noble who had pretensions to being "civilised" learned to speak French fluently, and gained some superficial acquaintance with French literature. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine and the comedies of Molière were played regularly at the Court theatre in presence of the Empress, and awakened a real or affected enthusiasm among the audience. For those who preferred reading in their native language, numerous translations were published, a simple list of which would fill several pages. Among them we find not only Voltaire, Rousseau, Lesage, Marmontel, and other favourite French authors, but also all the masterpieces of European literature, ancient and modern, which at that time enjoyed a high reputation in the French literary world—Homer and Demosthenes, Cicero and Virgil, Ariosto and Camoens, Milton and Locke, Sterne and Fielding.

It is related of Byron that he never wrote a description whilst the scene was actually before him; and this fact points to an important psychological

principle. The human mind, so long as it is compelled to strain the receptive faculties, cannot engage in that "poetic" activity—to use the term in its Greek sense —which is commonly called "original creation." And as with individuals, so with nations. By accepting in a lump a foreign culture a nation inevitably condemns itself for a time to intellectual sterility. So long as it is occupied in receiving and assimilating a flood of new ideas, unfamiliar conceptions, and foreign modes of thought, it will produce nothing original, and the result of its highest efforts will be merely successful imitation. We need not be surprised therefore to find that the Russians, in becoming acquainted with foreign literature, became imitators and plagiarists. In this kind of work their natural pliancy of mind and powerful histrionic talent made them wonderfully successful. Odes, pseudo-classical tragedies, satirical comedies, epic poems, elegies, and all the other recognised forms of poetical composition, appeared in great profusion, and many of the writers acquired a remarkable command over their native language, which had hitherto been regarded as uncouth and barbarous. But in all this mass of imitative literature, which has since fallen into well-merited oblivion, there are very few traces of genuine originality. To obtain the title of the Russian Racine, the Russian Lafontaine, the Russian Pindar, or the Russian Homer, was at that time the highest aim of Russian literary ambition.

Together with the fashionable literature the Russian educated classes adopted something of the fashionable philosophy. They were peculiarly unfitted to resist that hurricane of "enlightenment" which swept over Europe during the latter half of the eighteenth century, first breaking or uprooting the received philosophical systems, theological conceptions, and scientific theories, and then shaking to their foundations the

existing political and social institutions. The Russian Noblesse had neither the traditional conservative spirit nor the firm, well-reasoned, logical beliefs which in England and Germany formed a powerful barrier against the spread of French influence. They had been too recently metamorphosed, and were too eager to acquire a foreign civilisation, to have even the germs of a conservative spirit. The rapidity and violence with which Peter's reforms had been effected, together with the peculiar spirit of Greek Orthodoxy and the low intellectual level of the clergy, had prevented theology from associating itself with the new order of things. The upper classes had become estranged from the beliefs of their forefathers without acquiring other beliefs to supply the place of those which had been lost. The old religious conceptions were inseparably interwoven with what was recognised as antiquated and barbarous, whilst the new philosophical ideas were associated with all that was modern and civilised. Besides this, the sovereign, Catherine II., who enjoyed the unbounded admiration of the upper classes, openly professed allegiance to the new philosophy, and sought the advice and friendship of its High Priests. If we bear in mind these facts we shall not be surprised to find among the Russian nobles of that time a considerable number of so-called "Voltaireans" and numerous unquestioning believers in the infallibility of the Encyclopédie. What is a little more surprising is, that the new philosophy sometimes found its way into the ecclesiastical seminaries. The famous Speranski relates that in the seminary of St. Petersburg, one of his professors, when not in a state of intoxication, was in the habit of preaching the doctrines of Voltaire and Diderot!

The rise of the sentimental school in Western Europe produced an important change in Russian

literature, by undermining the inordinate admiration for the French pseudo-classical school. Florian, Richardson, Sterne, Rousseau, and Bernardin de St. Pierre found first translators, and then imitators, and soon the loud-sounding declamation and wordy ecstatic despair of the stage heroes were drowned in the deep-drawn sighs and plaintive wailings of amorous swains and peasant maids forsaken. The mania seems to have been in Russia even more severe than in the countries where it originated. Full-grown, bearded men wept because they had not been born in peaceful primitive times, "when all men were shepherds and brothers." Hundreds of sighing youths and maidens visited the scenes described by the sentimental writers, and wandered by the rivers and ponds in which despairing heroines had drowned themselves. People talked, wrote, and meditated about "the sympathy of hearts created for each other," "the soft communion of sympathetic souls," and much more of the same kind. Sentimental journeys became a favourite amusement, and formed the subject of very popular books, containing maudlin absurdities likely to produce nowadays mirth rather than tears. One traveller, for instance, throws himself on his knees before an old oak and makes a speech to it; another weeps daily on the grave of a favourite dog, and constantly longs to marry a peasant girl; a third talks love to the moon, sends kisses to the stars, and wishes to press the heavenly orbs to his bosom! For a time the public would read nothing but absurd productions of this sort, and Karamzín, the great literary authority of the time, expressly declared that the true function of Art was "to disseminate agreeable impressions in the region of the sentimental."

The love of French philosophy vanished as suddenly as the inordinate admiration of the French

pseudo-classical literature. When the great Revolution broke out in Paris, the fashionable philosophic literature in St. Petersburg disappeared. Men who talked about political freedom and the rights of man, without thinking for a moment of limiting the autocratic power or of emancipating their serfs, were naturally surprised and frightened on discovering what the liberal principles could effect when applied to real life. Horrified by the awful scenes of the Terror, they hastened to divest themselves of the principles which led to such results, and sank into a kind of optimistic conservatism that harmonised well with the virtuous sentimentalism in vogue. In this the Empress herself gave the example. The Imperial disciple and friend of the Encyclopædists became in the last years of her reign a decided *réactionnaire*.

During the Napoleonic wars, when the patriotic feelings were excited, there was a violent hostility to foreign intellectual influence; and feeble intermittent attempts were made to throw off the intellectual bondage. The invasion of the country in 1812 by the Grande Armée, and the burning of Moscow, added abundant fuel to this patriotic fire. For some time anyone who ventured to express even a moderate admiration for French culture incurred the risk of being stigmatised as a traitor to his country and a renegade to the national faith. But this patriotic fanaticism soon evaporated, and the exaggerations of the ultra-national party became the object of satire and parody. When the political danger was past, and people resumed their ordinary occupations, those who loved foreign literature returned to their old favourites—or, as the ultra-patriots called it, to their "wallowing in the mire"—simply because the native literature did not supply them with what they desired. "We are quite ready," they said to their upbraiders,

"to admire your great works as soon as they appear, but in the meantime please allow us to enjoy what we possess." Thus in the last years of the reign of Alexander I. the patriotic opposition to West European literature gradually ceased, and a new period of unrestricted intellectual importation began.

The intellectual merchandise now brought into the country was very different from that which had been imported in the time of Catherine. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic domination, the patriotic wars, the restoration of the Bourbons, and the other great events of that memorable epoch, had in the interval produced profound changes in the intellectual as well as the political condition of Western Europe. During the Napoleonic wars Russia had become closely associated with Germany; and now the peculiar intellectual fermentation which was going on among the German educated classes was reflected in the society of St. Petersburg. It did not appear, indeed, in the printed literature, for the Press-censure had been recently organised on the principles laid down by Metternich, but it was none the less violent on that account. Whilst the periodicals were filled with commonplace meditations on youth, spring, the love of Art, and similar innocent topics, the young generation was discussing in the salons all the burning questions which Metternich and his adherents were endeavouring to extinguish.

These discussions, if discussions they might be called, were not of a very serious kind. In true dilettante style the fashionable young philosophers culled from the newest books the newest thoughts and theories, and retailed them in the salon or the ball-room. And they were always sure to find attentive listeners. The more astounding the idea or dogma, the more likely was it to be favourably

received. No matter whether it came from the Rationalists, the Mystics, the Freemasons, or the Methodists, it was certain to find favour, provided it was novel and presented in an elegant form. The eclectic minds of that curious time could derive equal satisfaction from the brilliant discourses of the reactionary jesuitical De Maistre, the revolutionary odes of Pushkin, and the mysticism of Frau von Krüdener. For the majority the vague theosophic doctrines and the projects for a spiritual union of governments and peoples had perhaps the greatest charm, being specially commended by the fact that they enjoyed the protection and sympathy of the Emperor. Pious souls discovered in the mystical lucubrations of Jung-Stilling and Baader the final solution of all existing difficulties—political, social, and philosophical. Men of less dreamy temperament put their faith in political economy and constitutional theories, and sought a foundation for their favourite schemes in the past history of the country and in the supposed fundamental peculiarities of the national character. Like the young German democrats, who were then talking enthusiastically about Teutons, Cheruskers, Skalds, the shade of Arminius, and the heroes of the Niebelungen, these young Russian *savants* recognised in early Russian history—when reconstructed according to their own fancy—lofty political ideals, and dreamed of resuscitating the ancient institutions in all their pristine imaginary splendour.

Each age has its peculiar social and political panaceas. One generation puts its trust in religion, another in philanthropy, a third in written constitutions, a fourth in universal suffrage, a fifth in popular education. In the Epoch of the Restoration, as it is called, the favourite panacea all over the

Continent was secret political association. Very soon after the overthrow of Napoleon, the peoples who had risen in arms to obtain political independence discovered that they had merely changed masters. The Princes reconstructed Europe according to their own convenience, without paying much attention to patriotic aspirations, and forgot their promises of liberal institutions as soon as they were again firmly seated on their thrones. This was naturally for many a bitter deception. The young generation, excluded from all share in political life and gagged by the stringent police supervision, sought to realise its political aspirations by means of secret societies, resembling more or less the masonic brotherhoods. There were the Burschenschaften in Germany; the Union, and the "Aide toi et le ciel t'aidera," in France; the Order of the Hammer in Spain; the Carbonari in Italy; and the Hetairai in Greece. In Russia the young nobles followed the prevailing fashion. Secret societies were formed, and in December, 1825, an attempt was made to raise a military insurrection in St. Petersburg, for the purpose of deposing the Imperial family and proclaiming a republic; but the attempt failed, and the vague Utopian dreams of the romantic would-be reformers were swept away by grape-shot.

This "December catastrophe," still vividly remembered, was for the society of St. Petersburg like the giving way of the floor in a crowded ball-room. But a moment before, all had been animated, careless, and happy; now consternation was depicted on every face. The salons that but yesterday had been ringing with lively discussions on morals, æsthetics, politics, and theology, were now silent and deserted. Many of those who had been wont to lead the *causeries* had been removed to the cells of the

fortress, and those who had not been arrested trembled for themselves or their friends; for nearly all had of late dabbled more or less in the theory and practice of revolution. The announcement that five of the conspirators had been condemned to the gallows and the others sentenced to transportation did not tend to calm the consternation. Society was like a discomfited child, who, amidst the delight and excitement of letting off fireworks, has had his fingers severely burnt.

The sentimental, wavering Alexander I. had been succeeded by his stern, energetic brother Nicholas, and the command went forth that there should be no more fireworks, no more dilettante philosophising or political aspirations. There was, however, little need for such an order. Society had been, for the moment at least, effectually cured of all tendencies to political dreaming. It had discovered, to its astonishment and dismay, that these new ideas, which were to bring temporal salvation to humanity, and to make all men happy, virtuous, refined, and poetical, led in reality to exile and the scaffold! The pleasant dream was at an end, and the fashionable world, giving up its former habits, took to harmless occupations—card-playing, dissipation, and the reading of French light literature. "The French quadrille," as a writer of the time tersely expresses it, "has taken the place of Adam Smith."

When the storm had passed, the life of the salons began anew, but it was very different from what it had been. There was no longer any talk about political economy, theology, popular education, administrative abuses, social and political reforms. Everything that had any relation to politics in the wider sense of the term was by tacit consent avoided. Discussions there were as of old, but they were now

confined to literary topics, theories of art, and similar innocent subjects.

This indifference or positive repugnance to philosophy and political science, strengthened and prolonged by the repressive system of administration adopted by Nicholas, was of course fatal to the many-sided intellectual activity which had flourished during the preceding reign, but it was by no means unfavourable to the cultivation of imaginative literature. On the contrary, by excluding those practical interests which tend to disturb artistic production and to engross the attention of the public, it fostered what was called in the phraseology of that time "the pure hearted worship of the Muses." We need not, therefore, be surprised to find that the reign of Nicholas, which is commonly and not unjustly described as an epoch of social and intellectual stagnation, may be called in a certain sense the Golden Age of Russian literature.

Already in the preceding reign the struggle between the Classical and the Romantic school—between the adherents of traditional æsthetic principles and the partisans of untrammelled poetic inspiration—which was being carried on in Western Europe, was reflected in Russia. A group of young men belonging to the aristocratic society of St. Petersburg embraced with enthusiasm the new doctrines, and declared war against "classicism," under which term they understood all that was antiquated, dry, and pedantic. Discarding the stately, lumbering, unwieldy periods which had hitherto been in fashion, they wrote a light, elastic, vigorous style, and formed a literary society for the express purpose of ridiculing the most approved classical writers. The new principles found many adherents, and the new style many admirers, but this only intensified the

hostility of the literary Conservatives. The staid, respectable leaders of the old school, who had all their lives kept the fear of Boileau before their eyes and considered his precepts as the infallible utterances of æsthetic wisdom, thundered against the impious innovations as unmistakable symptoms of literary decline and moral degeneracy—representing the boisterous young iconoclasts as dissipated Don Juans and dangerous freethinkers.

Thus for some time in Russia, as in Western Europe, "a terrible war raged on Parnassus." At first the Government frowned at the innovators, on account of certain revolutionary odes which one of their number had written; but when the Romantic Muse, having turned away from the present as essentially prosaic, went back into the distant past and soared into the region of sublime abstractions, the most keen-eyed Press Censors found no reason to condemn her worship, and the authorities placed almost no restrictions on free poetic inspiration. Romantic poetry acquired the protection of the Government and the patronage of the Court, and the names of Zhukofski, Pushkin, and Lermontof—the three chief representatives of the Russian Romantic school—became household words in all ranks of the educated classes.

These three great luminaries of the literary world were of course attended by a host of satellites of various magnitudes, who did all in their power to refute the Romantic principles by *reductiones ad absurdum*. Endowed for the most part with considerable facility of composition, the poetasters poured forth their feelings with torrential recklessness, demanding freedom for their inspiration, and cursing the age that fettered them with its prosaic cares, its cold reason, and its dry science. At the same time

the dramatists and novelists created heroes of immaculate character and angelic purity, endowed with all the cardinal virtues in the superlative degree; and, as a contrast to these, terrible Satanic personages with savage passions, gleaming daggers, deadly poisons, and all manner of aimless melodramatic villainy. These stilted productions, interspersed with light satirical essays, historical sketches, literary criticism, and amusing anecdotes, formed the contents of the periodical literature, and completely satisfied the wants of the reading public. Almost no one at that time took any interest in public affairs or foreign politics. The acts of the Government which were watched most attentively were the promotions in the service and the conferring of decorations. The publication of a new tale by Zagóskin or Marlínski—two writers now well-nigh forgotten—seemed of much greater importance than any amount of legislation, and such events as the French Revolution of 1830 paled before the publication of a new poem by Pushkin.

The Transcendental philosophy, which in Germany went hand in hand with the Romantic literature, found likewise a faint reflection in Russia. A number of young professors and students in Moscow, who had become ardent admirers of German literature, passed from the works of Schiller, Goethe, and Hoffmann to the writings of Schelling and Hegel. Trained in the Romantic school, these young philosophers found at first a special charm in Schelling's mystical system, teeming with hazy poetical metaphors, and presenting a misty grandiose picture of the universe; but gradually they felt the want of some logical basis for their speculations, and Hegel became their favourite. Gallantly they struggled with the uncouth terminology and epigrammatic paradoxes of the great thinker, and

strove to force their way through the intricate mazes of his logical formulæ. With the ardour of neophytes they looked at every phenomenon—even the most trivial incident of common life—from the philosophical point of view, talked day and night about principles, ideas, subjectivity, *Weltauffassung*, and similar abstract entities, and habitually attacked the "hydra of unphilosophy" by analysing the phenomena presented and relegating the ingredient elements to the recognised categories. In ordinary life they were men of quiet, grave, contemplative demeanour, but their faces could flush and their blood boil when they discussed the all-important question whether it is possible to pass logically from Pure Being through Nonentity to the conception of Development and Definite Existence!

We know how in Western Europe Romanticism and Transcendentalism, in their various forms, sank into oblivion, and were replaced by a literature which had a closer connection with ordinary prosaic wants and plain everyday life. The educated public became weary of the Romantic writers, who were always "sighing like a furnace," delighting in solitude, cold eternity, and moonshine, deluging the world with their heart-gushings, and calling on the heavens and the earth to stand aghast at their Promethean agonising or their Wertherean despair. Healthy human nature revolted against the poetical enthusiasts, who had lost the faculty of seeing things in their natural light, and who constantly indulged in that morbid self-analysis which is fatal to genuine feeling and vigorous action. And in this healthy reaction the philosophers fared no better than the poets, with whom, indeed, they had much in common. Shutting their eyes to the visible world around them, they had busied themselves with burrowing in the mysterious

depths of Absolute Being, grappling with the *ego* and the *non-ego*, constructing the great world, visible and invisible, out of their own puny internal self-consciousness, endeavouring to appropriate all departments of human thought, and imparting to every subject they touched the dryness and rigidity of an algebraical formula. Gradually men with real human sympathies began to perceive that from all this philosophical turmoil little real advantage was to be derived. It became only too evident that the philosophers were perfectly reconciled with all the evil in the world, provided it did not contradict their theories; that they were men of the same type as the physician in Molière's comedy, whose chief care was that his patients should die *selon les ordonnances de la médecine*.

In Russia the reaction first appeared in the æsthetic literature. Its first influential representative was Gógol (b. 1808, d. 1852), who may be called, in a certain sense, the Russian Dickens. A minute comparison of those two great humourists would perhaps show as many points of contrast as of similarity, but there is a strong superficial resemblance between them. They both possessed an inexhaustible supply of broad humour and an imagination of singular vividness. Both had the power of seeing the ridiculous side of common things, and the talent of producing caricatures that had a wonderful semblance of reality. A little calm reflection would suffice to show that the characters presented are for the most part psychological impossibilities; but on first making their acquaintance we are so struck with one or two life-like characteristics and various little details dexterously introduced, and at the same time we are so carried away by the overflowing fun of the narrative, that we have neither time nor inclination to use our critical faculties. In a

very short time Gógol's fame spread throughout the length and breadth of the Empire, and many of his characters became as familiar to his countrymen as Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp were to Englishmen. His descriptions were so graphic—so like the world which everybody knew! The characters seemed to be old acquaintances hit off to the life; and readers revelled in that peculiar pleasure which most of us derive from seeing our friends successfully mimicked. Even the Iron Tsar could not resist the fun and humour of "The Inspector" (*Revizór*), and not only laughed heartily, but also protected the author against the tyranny of the literary censors, who considered that the piece was not written in a sufficiently "well-intentioned" tone. In a word, the reading public laughed as it had never laughed before, and this wholesome genuine merriment did much to destroy the morbid appetite for Byronic heroes and Romantic affectation.

The Romantic Muse did not at once abdicate, but with the spread of Gógol's popularity her reign was practically at an end. In vain some of the conservative critics decried the new favourite as talentless, prosaic, and vulgar. The public were not to be robbed of their amusement for the sake of any abstract æsthetic considerations; and young authors, taking Gógol for their model, chose their subjects from real life, and endeavoured to delineate with minute truthfulness.

This new intellectual movement was at first purely literary, and affected merely the manner of writing novels, tales, and poems. The critics who had previously demanded beauty of form and elegance of expression now demanded accuracy of description, condemned the aspirations towards so-called high art, and praised loudly those who produced the best

literary photographs. But authors and critics did not long remain on this purely æsthetic standpoint. The authors, in describing reality, began to indicate moral approval and condemnation, and the critics began to pass from the criticism of the representations to the criticism of the realities represented. A poem or a tale was often used as a peg on which to hang a moral lecture, and the fictitious characters were soundly rated for their sins of omission and commission. Much was said about the defence of the oppressed, female emancipation, honour, and humanitarianism; and ridicule was unsparingly launched against all forms of ignorance, apathy, and the spirit of routine. The ordinary refrain was that the public ought now to discard what was formerly regarded as poetical and sublime, and to occupy itself with practical concerns —with the real wants of social life.

The literary movement was thus becoming a movement in favour of social and political reform when it was suddenly arrested by political events in the West. The February Revolution in Paris, and the political fermentation which appeared during 1848–49 in almost every country of Europe, alarmed the Emperor Nicholas and his counsellors. A Russian army was sent into Austria to suppress the Hungarian insurrection and save the Habsburg dynasty, and the most stringent measures were taken to prevent disorders at home. One of the first precautions for the preservation of domestic tranquillity was to muzzle the Press more firmly than before, and to silence the aspirations towards reform and progress; thenceforth nothing could be printed which was not in strict accordance with the ultra-patriotic theory of Russian history, as expressed by a leading official personage: "The past has been admirable, the present is more than magnificent, and the future will surpass

all that the human imagination can conceive!" The alarm caused by the revolutionary disorders spread to the non-official world, and gave rise to much patriotic self-congratulation. "The nations of the West," it was said, "envy us, and if they knew us better—if they could see how happy and prosperous we are—they would envy us still more. We ought not, however, to withdraw from Europe our solicitude; its hostility should not deprive us of our high mission of saving order and restoring rest to the nations; we ought to teach them to obey authority as we do. It is for us to introduce the saving principle of order into a world that has fallen a prey to anarchy. Russia ought not to abandon that mission which has been entrusted to her by the heavenly and by the earthly Tsar." *

Men who saw in the significant political eruption of 1848 nothing but an outburst of meaningless, aimless anarchy, and who believed that their country was destined to restore order throughout the civilised world, had of course little time or inclination to think of putting their own house in order. No one now spoke of the necessity of social reorganisation; the recently awakened aspirations and expectations seemed to be completely forgotten. The critics returned to their old theory that art and literature should be cultivated for their own sake and not used as a vehicle for the propagation of ideas foreign to their nature. It seemed, in short, as if all the prolific ideas which had for a time occupied the public attention had been merely "writ in water," and had now disappeared without leaving a trace behind them.

In reality the new movement was destined to reappear very soon with tenfold force; but the account of

* These words were written by Tchaadáef, who, a few years before, had vigorously attacked the Slavophils for enouncing similar views.

its re-appearance and development belong to a future chapter. Meanwhile I may formulate the general conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing pages. Ever since the time of Peter the Great there has been such a close connection between Russia and Western Europe that every intellectual movement which has appeared in France and Germany has been reflected—albeit in an exaggerated, distorted form—in the educated society of St. Petersburg and Moscow. Thus the window which Peter opened in order to enable his subjects to look into Europe has well served its purpose.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CRIMEAN WAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The Emperor Nicholas and his System—The Men with Aspirations and the Apathetically Contented—National Humiliation—Popular Discontent and the Manuscript Literature—Death of Nicholas—Alexander II.—New Spirit—Reform Enthusiasm—Change in the Periodical Literature—The *Kôlokol*—The Conservatives—The *Tchinóvniks*—First Specific Proposals—Joint-Stock Companies—The Serf Question comes to the Front.

THE Russians frankly admit that they were beaten in the Crimean War, but they regard the heroic defence of Sebastopol as one of the most glorious events in the military annals of their country. Nor do they altogether regret the result of the struggle. Often in a half-jocular, half-serious tone they say that they had reason to be grateful to the Allies. And there is much truth in this paradoxical statement. The Crimean War inaugurated a new epoch in the national history. It gave the death-blow to the repressive system of the Emperor Nicholas, and produced an intellectual movement and a moral revival which led to gigantic results.

"The affair of December," 1825—I mean the abortive attempt at a military insurrection in St. Petersburg, to which I have alluded in the foregoing chapter—gave the key-note to Nicholas's reign. The armed attempt to overthrow the Imperial power, ending in the execution or exile of many young members of the first families, struck terror into the Noblesse, and prepared the way for a period of repressive police administration. Nicholas had none of the moral limpness and vacillating character of his predecessor. His was one of those simple, vigorous, tenacious,

straightforward natures—more frequently to be met with among the Teutonic than among the Slav races—whose conceptions are all founded on a few deep-rooted, semi-instinctive convictions, and who are utterly incapable of accommodating themselves with histrionic cleverness to the changes of external circumstances. From his early youth he had shown a strong liking for military discipline, and a decided repugnance to the humanitarianism and liberal principles then in fashion. With "the rights of man," "the spirit of the age," and similar philosophical abstractions, his strong, domineering nature had no sympathy; and for the vague, loud-sounding phrases of philosophic liberalism he had a most profound contempt. "Attend to your military duties," he was wont to say to his officers, before his accession; "don't trouble your heads with philosophy. I cannot bear philosophers!"

The tragic event which formed the prelude to his reign naturally confirmed and fortified his previous convictions. The representatives of liberalism, who could talk so eloquently about duty in the abstract, had, whilst wearing the uniform of the Imperial Guard, openly disobeyed the repeated orders of their superior officers and attempted to shake the allegiance of the troops for the purpose of overthrowing the Imperial power! A man who was at once soldier and autocrat, by nature as well as by position, could of course admit no extenuating circumstances. The incident stereotyped his character for life, and made him the sworn enemy of liberalism and the fanatical defender of autocracy, not only in his own country, but throughout Europe. In European politics he saw two forces struggling for mastery—monarchy and democracy, which were in his opinion identical with order and anarchy; and he was always ready to assist his

brother sovereigns in putting down democratic movements. In his own Empire he endeavoured by every means in his power to prevent the introduction of the dangerous ideas. For this purpose a stringent intellectual quarantine was established on the western frontier. All foreign books and newspapers, except those of the most harmless kind, were rigorously excluded. Native writers were placed under strict supervision, and peremptorily silenced as soon as they departed from what was considered a "well-intentioned" tone. The number of university students was diminished, the chairs for political science were suppressed, and the military schools multiplied. Russians were prevented from travelling abroad, and foreigners who visited the country were closely watched by the police. By these and similar measures it was hoped that Russia would be preserved from the dangers of revolutionary agitation.

Nicholas has been called the Don Quixote of Autocracy, and the comparison which the term implies is true in many points. By character and aims he belonged to a time that had passed away; but failure and mishap could not shake his faith in his ideal, and made no change in his honest, stubborn nature, which was as loyal and chivalresque as that of the ill-fated Knight of La Mancha. In spite of all evidence to the contrary, he believed in the practical omnipotence of autocracy. He imagined that as his authority was theoretically unlimited, so his power could work miracles. By nature and training a soldier, he considered government a slightly modified form of military discipline, and looked on the nation as an army which might be made to perform any intellectual or economic evolutions that he might see fit to command. All social ills seemed to him the consequence of disobedience to his orders, and he knew only one remedy—more

discipline. Any expression of doubt as to the wisdom of his policy, or any criticism of existing regulations, he treated as an act of insubordination which a wise sovereign ought not to tolerate. If he never said, "L'État—c'est moi!" it was because he considered the fact so self-evident that it did not need to be stated. Hence, any attack on the administration, even in the person of the most insignificant official, was an attack on himself and on the monarchical principle which he represented. The people must believe—and faith, as we know, comes not by sight—that they lived under the best possible government. To doubt of this was political heresy. An incautious word or a foolish joke against the Government was considered a serious crime, and might be punished by a long exile in some distant and inhospitable part of the Empire. Progress should by all means be made, but it must be made by word of command, and in the way ordered. Private initiative in any form was a thing on no account to be tolerated.

Nicholas never suspected that a ruler, however well-intentioned, energetic, and legally autocratic he may be, can do but little without the co-operation of his people. Experience constantly showed him the fruitlessness of his efforts, but he paid no attention to its teachings. He had formed once for all his theory of government, and for thirty years he acted according to it with all the blindness and obstinacy of a reckless, fanatical doctrinaire. Even at the close of his reign, when the terrible logic of facts had proved his system to be a mistake—when his armies had been defeated, his best fleet destroyed, his ports blockaded, and his treasury well-nigh emptied—he could not recant. "My successor," he is reported to have said on his death-bed, "may do as he pleases, but I cannot change."

Had Nicholas lived in the old patriarchal times, when kings were the uncontrolled "shepherds of the people," he would perhaps have been an admirable ruler; but in the nineteenth century he was a flagrant anachronism. His system of administration completely broke down. In vain he multiplied formalities and inspectors, and punished severely the few delinquents who happened by some accident to be brought to justice; the officials continued to pilfer, extort, and misgovern in every possible way. Though the country was reduced to what would be called in Europe "a state of siege," the inhabitants might still have said—as they are reported to have declared a thousand years before—"Our land is great and fertile, but there is no order in it."

In a nation accustomed to political life and to a certain amount of self-government, any approach to the system of Nicholas would, of course, have produced wide-spread dissatisfaction and violent hatred against the ruling power. But in Russia at that time no such feelings were awakened. The educated classes—and *à fortiori* the uneducated—were profoundly indifferent not only to political questions, but also to ordinary public affairs, whether local or Imperial, and were quite content to leave them in the hands of those who were paid for attending to them. In common with the uneducated peasantry, the nobles had a boundless respect—one might almost say a superstitious reverence—not only for the person, but also for the will of the Tsar, and were ready to show unquestioning obedience to his commands, so long as these did not interfere with their accustomed mode of life. The Tsar desired them not to trouble their heads with political questions, and to leave all public matters to the care of the Administration; and in this respect the Imperial will coincided so well with their

personal inclinations that they had no difficulty in complying with it.

When the Tsar ordered those of them who held office to refrain from extortion and peculation, his orders were not so punctiliously obeyed, but in this disobedience there was no open opposition—no assertion of a right to pilfer and extort. As the disobedience proceeded, not from a feeling of insubordination, but merely from the weakness that official flesh is heir to, it was not regarded as very heinous. In polite society the shortcomings of officials might be mentioned as material for amusing anecdotes, but never as an argument for reform. Advocacy of reform would have been inconsistent with the reputation of being "well-intentioned," which was an indispensable condition for Court favour and promotion in the service. Outside of official duties and the routine of everyday life, the only legitimate subjects of interest were *belles-lettres* and the fine arts. In short, the educated classes in Russia at that time showed a complete indifference to political and social questions, an apathetic acquiescence in the system of administration adopted by the Government, and an unreasoning contentment with the existing state of things.

About the year 1845, when the reaction against Romanticism was awakening in the reading public an interest in the affairs of real life,* the prevalent optimistic apathy was disturbed by the so-called "men with aspirations," a little band of enthusiasts, strongly resembling the youth in Longfellow's poem who carries a banner with the device "Excelsior," and strives ever to climb higher, without having any clear notion of where he is going to, or of what he is to do when he reaches the summit. At first they

* *Vide supra*, pp. 78–80.

had little more than a sentimental enthusiasm for the true, the beautiful, and the good, and a certain Platonic love of free institutions, liberty, enlightenment, progress, and everything that was generally comprehended at that period under the term "liberal." Gradually, under the influence of the current French literature, their ideas became a little clearer, and they began to look on reality around them with a critical eye. They could perceive, without much effort, the unrelenting tyranny of the Administration, the notorious venality of the tribunals, the reckless squandering of the public money, the miserable condition of the serfs, the systematic strangulation of all independent opinion or private initiative, and, above all, the profound apathy of the upper classes, who seemed quite content with things as they were.

With such ugly facts staring them in the face, and with the habit of looking at things from the moral point of view, these men could understand how hollow and false were the soothing or triumphant phrases of official optimism. They did not, indeed, dare to express their indignation publicly, for the authorities would allow no public expression of dissatisfaction with the existing state of things, but they disseminated their ideas among their friends and acquaintances by means of conversation and manuscript literature, and some of them, as university professors and writers in the periodical Press, contrived to awaken in a certain section of the young generation an ardent enthusiasm for enlightenment and progress, and a vague hope that a brighter day was about to dawn.

Not a few sympathised with these new conceptions and aspirations, but the great majority of the nobles regarded them—especially after the French Revolution of 1848—as revolutionary and dangerous. Thus the

educated classes became divided into two sections, which have sometimes been called the Liberals and the Conservatives, but which might be more properly designated the men with aspirations and the apathetically contented. These latter doubtless felt occasionally the irksomeness of the existing system, but they had always one consolation: if they were oppressed at home they were feared abroad. The Tsar was at least a thorough soldier, possessing an enormous and well-equipped army, by which he might at any moment impose his will on Europe. Ever since the glorious days of 1812, when Napoleon was forced to make an ignominious retreat from the ruins of Moscow, the belief that the Russian soldiers were superior to all others, and that the Russian army was invincible, had become an article of the popular creed; and the respect which the voice of Nicholas commanded in Western Europe seemed to prove that the fact was admitted by foreign nations. In these and similar considerations the apathetically contented found a justification for their lethargy.

When it became evident that Russia was about to engage in a trial of strength with the Western Powers, this optimism became general. "The heavy burdens," it was said, "which the people have had to bear were necessary to make Russia the first military Power in Europe, and now the nation will reap the fruits of its long-suffering and patient resignation. The West will learn that her boasted liberty and liberal institutions are of little service in the hour of danger, and the Russians who admire such institutions will be constrained to admit that a strong, all-directing autocracy is the only means of preserving national greatness." As the patriotic fervour and military enthusiasm increased, nothing was heard but praises of Nicholas and his system. The war was regarded by many as a

kind of crusade—even the Emperor spoke about the defence of "the native soil and the holy faith"—and the most exaggerated expectations were entertained of its results. The old Eastern Question was at last to be solved in accordance with Russian aspirations, and Nicholas was about to realise Catherine II.'s grand scheme of driving the Turks out of Europe. The date at which the troops would arrive at Constantinople was actively discussed, and a Slavophil poet called on the Emperor to lie down in Constantinople, and rise up as Tsar of a Panslavonic Empire. Some enthusiasts even expected the speedy liberation of Jerusalem from the power of the Infidel. To the enemy, who might possibly hinder the accomplishment of these schemes, very little attention was paid. "We have only to throw our hats at them!" (*shápkami zakidáem*) became a favourite expression.

There were, however, a few men in whom the prospect of the coming struggle awoke very different thoughts and feelings. They could not share the sanguine expectations of those who were confident of success. "What preparations have we made," they asked, "for the struggle with civilisation, which now sends its forces against us? With all our vast territory and countless population we are incapable of coping with it. When we talk of the glorious campaigns against Napoleon, we forget that since that time Europe has been steadily advancing on the road of progress while we have been standing still. We march not to victory, but to defeat, and the only grain of consolation which we have is that Russia will learn by experience a lesson that will be of use to her in the future."*

These prophets of evil found, of course, few disciples, and were generally regarded as unworthy sons

* These are the words of Granóvski.

of the Fatherland—almost as traitors to their country. But their predictions were confirmed by events. The Allies were victorious in the Crimea, and even the despised Turks made a successful stand on the line of the Danube. In spite of the efforts of the Government to suppress all unpleasant intelligence, it soon became known that the military organisation was little, if at all, better than the civil administration—that the individual bravery of soldiers and officers was neutralised by the incapacity of the generals, the venality of the officials, and the shameless peculation of the commissariat department. The Emperor, it was said, had drilled out of the officers all energy, individuality, and moral force. Almost the only men who showed judgment, decision, and energy were the officers of the Black Sea fleet, which had been less subjected to the prevailing system. As the struggle went on, it became evident how weak the country really was—how deficient in the resources necessary to sustain a prolonged conflict. "Another year of war," writes an eye-witness in 1855, "and the whole of Southern Russia will be ruined." To meet the extraordinary demands on the Treasury, recourse was had to an enormous issue of paper-money; but the rapid depreciation of the currency showed that this resource would soon be exhausted. Militia regiments were everywhere raised throughout the country, and many proprietors spent large sums in equipping volunteer corps; but very soon this enthusiasm cooled when it was found that the patriotic efforts enriched the jobbers without inflicting any serious injury on the enemy.

Under the sting of the great national humiliation, the upper classes awoke from their optimistic resignation. They had borne patiently the oppression of a semi-military administration, and for this! The

system of Nicholas had been put to a crucial test, and found wanting. The policy which had sacrificed all to increase the military power of the Empire was seen to be a fatal error, and the worthlessness of the drill-sergeant *régime* was proved by bitter experience. Those administrative fetters which had for more than a quarter of a century cramped every spontaneous movement had failed to fulfil even the narrow purpose for which they had been forged. They had, indeed, secured a certain external tranquillity during those troublous times when Europe was convulsed by revolutionary agitation; but this tranquillity was not that of healthy normal action, but of death—and underneath the surface lay secret and rapidly spreading corruption. The army still possessed that dashing gallantry which it had displayed in the campaigns of Suvórof, that dogged, stoical bravery which had checked the advance of Napoleon on the field of Borodino, and that wondrous power of endurance which had often redeemed the negligence of generals and the defects of the commissariat; but the result was now not victory, but defeat. How could this be explained except by the radical defects of that system which had been long practised with such inflexible perseverance? The Government had imagined that it could do everything by its own wisdom and energy, and in reality it had done nothing, or worse than nothing. The higher officers had learned only too well to be mere automata; the ameliorations in the military organisation, on which Nicholas had always bestowed special attention, were found to exist for the most part only in the official reports; the shameful exploits of the commissariat department were such as to excite the indignation of those who had long lived in an atmosphere of official jobbery and peculation; and the finances, which people had generally supposed

to be in a highly satisfactory condition, had become seriously crippled by the first great national effort.

This deep and wide-spread dissatisfaction was not allowed to appear in the Press, but it found very free expression in the manuscript literature and in conversation. In almost every house—I mean, of course, among the educated classes—words were spoken which a few months before would have seemed treasonable, if not blasphemous. Philippics and satires in prose and verse were written by the dozen, and circulated in hundreds of copies. A pasquil on the Commander-in-Chief, or a tirade against the Government, was sure to be eagerly read and warmly approved of. As a specimen of this kind of literature, and an illustration of the public opinion of the time, I may translate here one of those metrical tirades. Though it was never printed, it obtained a wide circulation:—

"'God has placed me over Russia,' said the Tsar to us, 'and you must bow down before me, for my throne is His altar. Trouble not yourselves with public affairs, for I think for you and watch over you every hour. My watchful eye detects internal evils and the machinations of foreign enemies; and I have no need of counsel, for God inspires me with wisdom. Be proud, therefore, of being my slaves, O Russians, and regard my will as your law.'

"We listened to these words with deep reverence, and gave a tacit consent; and what was the result? Under mountains of official papers real interests were forgotten. The letter of the law was observed, but negligence and crime were allowed to go unpunished. While grovelling in the dust before ministers and directors of departments, in the hope of receiving *tchins* and decorations, the officials stole unblushingly; and theft became so common that he who stole the

most was the most respected. The merits of officers were decided at reviews; and he who obtained the rank of General was supposed capable of becoming at once an able governor, an excellent engineer, or a most wise senator. Those who were appointed governors were for the most part genuine satraps, the scourges of the provinces entrusted to their care. The other offices were filled up with as little attention to the merits of the candidates. A stable-boy became Press Censor! an Imperial fool became admiral!! Kleinmichel became a count!!! In a word, the country was handed over to the tender mercies of a band of robbers.

"And what did we Russians do all this time?

"We Russians slept! With groans the peasant paid his yearly dues; with groans the proprietor mortgaged the second half of his estate; groaning, we all paid our heavy tribute to the officials. Occasionally, with a grave shaking of the head, we remarked in a whisper that it was a shame and a disgrace—that there was no justice in the courts—that millions were squandered on Imperial tours, kiosks, and pavilions—that everything was wrong; and then, with an easy conscience, we sat down to our rubber, praised the acting of Rachel, criticised the singing of Frezzolini, bowed low to venal magnates, and squabbled with each other for advancement in the very service which we so severely condemned. If we did not obtain the place we wished we retired to our ancestral estates, where we talked of the crops, fattened in indolence and gluttony, and lived a genuine animal life. If anyone, amidst the general lethargy, suddenly called upon us to rise and fight for the truth and for Russia, how ridiculous did he appear! How cleverly the Pharisaical official ridiculed him, and how quickly the friends of yesterday showed him

the cold shoulder! Under the anathema of public opinion, in some distant Siberian mine he recognised what a heinous sin it was to disturb the heavy sleep of apathetic slaves. Soon he was forgotten, or remembered as an unfortunate madman; and the few who said, 'Perhaps after all he was right,' hastened to add, 'but that is none of our business.'

"But amidst all this we had at least one consolation, one thing to be proud of—the might of Russia in the assembly of kings. 'What need we care,' we said, 'for the reproaches of foreign nations? We are stronger than those who reproach us.' And when at great reviews the stately regiments marched past with waving standards, glittering helmets, and sparkling bayonets, when we heard the loud hurrah with which the troops greeted the Emperor, then our hearts swelled with patriotic pride, and we were ready to repeat the words of the poet—

'Strong is our native country, and great the Russian Tsar.'

Then British statesmen, in company with the crowned conspirator of France, and with treacherous Austria, raised Western Europe against us, but we laughed scornfully at the coming storm. 'Let the nations rave,' we said; 'we have no cause to be afraid. The Tsar doubtless foresaw all, and has long since made the necessary preparations.' Boldly we went forth to fight, and confidently awaited the moment of the struggle.

"And lo! after all our boasting we were taken by surprise, and caught unawares, as by a robber in the dark. The sleep of innate stupidity blinded our Ambassadors, and our Foreign Minister sold us to our enemies.* Where were our millions of soldiers? Where was the well-considered plan of defence? One

* Many people at that time imagined that Count Nesselrode, who was then Minister for Foreign Affairs, was a traitor to his adopted country.

courier brought the order to advance; another brought the order to retreat; and the army wandered about without definite aim or purpose. With loss and shame we retreated from the forts of Silistria, and the pride of Russia was humbled before the Habsburg eagle. The soldiers fought well, but the parade-admiral (Menshikof)—the amphibious hero of lost battles—did not know the geography of his own country, and sent his troops to certain destruction.

"Awake, O Russia! Devoured by foreign enemies, crushed by slavery, shamefully oppressed by stupid authorities and spies, awaken from your long sleep of ignorance and apathy! You have been long enough held in bondage by the successors of the Tartar Khan. Stand forward calmly before the throne of the despot, and demand from him an account of the national disaster. Say to him boldly that his throne is not the altar of God, and that God did not condemn us to be slaves. Russia entrusted to you, O Tsar, the supreme power, and you were as a God upon earth. And what have you done? Blinded by ignorance and passion, you have lusted after power and have forgotten Russia. You have spent your life in reviewing troops, in modifying uniforms, and in appending your signature to the legislative projects of ignorant charlatans. You created the despicable race of Press Censors, in order to sleep in peace—in order not to know the wants and not to hear the groans of the people—in order not to listen to Truth. You buried Truth, rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, placed a strong guard over it, and said in the pride of your heart: For her there is no resurrection! But the third day has dawned, and Truth has arisen from the dead.

"Stand forward, O Tsar, before the judgment-seat of history and of God! You have mercilessly

trampled Truth under foot, you have denied Freedom, you have been the slave of your own passions. By your pride and obstinacy you have exhausted Russia and raised the world in arms against us. Bow down before your brethren and humble yourself in the dust! Crave pardon and ask advice! Throw yourself into the arms of the people! There is now no other salvation!"

The innumerable tirades of which the above is a fair specimen were not very remarkable for literary merit or political wisdom. For the most part they were simply bits of bombastic rhetoric couched in doggerel rhyme, and they have consequently been long since consigned to well-merited oblivion—so completely that it is now difficult to obtain copies of them.* They have, however, an historical interest, because they express in a more or less exaggerated form the public opinion and prevalent ideas of the educated classes at that moment. In order to comprehend their real significance, we must remember that the writers and readers were not a band of conspirators, but ordinary, respectable, well-intentioned people, who never for a moment dreamed of embarking in revolutionary designs. It was the same society that had been a few months before so indifferent to all political questions, and even now there was no clear conception as to how the loud-sounding phrases could be translated into action. We can imagine the comical discomfiture of those who read and listened to these appeals, if the "despot" had obeyed their summons, and suddenly appeared before them!

Was the movement, then, merely an outburst of childish petulance? Certainly not. The public were really and seriously convinced that things were all

* I am indebted for the copies which I possess to friends who copied and collected these pamphlets at the time.

wrong, and they were seriously and enthusiastically desirous that a new and better order of things should be introduced. It must be said to their honour that they did not content themselves with accusing and lampooning the individuals who were supposed to be the chief culprits. On the contrary, they looked reality boldly in the face, made a public confession of their past sins, sought conscientiously the causes which had produced the recent disasters, and endeavoured to find means by which such calamities might be prevented in the future. The public feeling and aspirations were not strong enough to conquer the traditional respect for the Imperial will and create an open opposition to the Autocratic Power, but they were strong enough to do great things by aiding the Government, if the Emperor voluntarily undertook a series of radical reforms.

What Nicholas would have done, had he lived, in face of this national awakening, it is difficult to say. He declared, indeed, that he could not change, and we can readily believe that his proud spirit would have scorned to make concessions to the principles which he had always condemned; but he gave decided indications in the last days of his life that his old faith in his system was somewhat shaken, and he did not exhort his son to persevere in the path along which he himself had forced his way with such obstinate consistency. It is useless, however, to speculate on possibilities. Whilst the Government had still to concentrate all its energies on the defence of the country, the Iron Tsar died, and was succeeded by his son, a man of a very different type.

Of a kind-hearted, humane disposition, sincerely desirous of maintaining the national honour, but singularly free from military ambition and imbued with no fanatical belief in the drill-sergeant system of

government, Alexander II. was by no means insensible to the spirit of the time. He had, however, none of the sentimental enthusiasm for liberal institutions which had characterised his uncle, Alexander I. On the contrary, he had inherited from his father a strong dislike to sentimentalism and rhetoric of all kinds. This dislike, joined to a goodly portion of sober common-sense, a limited confidence in his own judgment, and a consciousness of enormous responsibility, prevented him from being carried away by the prevailing excitement. With all that was generous and humane in the movement he thoroughly sympathised, and he allowed the popular ideas and aspirations to find free utterance; but he did not at once commit himself to any definite policy, and carefully refrained from all exaggerated expressions of reforming zeal.

As soon, however, as peace had been concluded, there were unmistakable symptoms that the rigorously repressive system of Nicholas was about to be abandoned. In the manifesto announcing the termination of hostilities the Emperor expressed his conviction that *by the combined efforts of the Government and the people*, the public administration would be improved, and that justice and mercy would reign in the courts of law. Apparently as a preparation for this great work, to be undertaken by the Tsar and his people in common, the ministers began to take the public into their confidence, and submitted to public criticism many official data which had hitherto been regarded as State secrets. The Minister of the Interior, for instance, in his annual report, spoke almost in the tone of a penitent, and confessed openly that the morality of the officials under his orders left much to be desired. He declared that the Emperor now showed a paternal confidence in his people, and as a proof of this he

mentioned the significant fact that 9,000 persons had been liberated from police supervision. The other branches of the Administration underwent a similar transformation. The haughty, dictatorial tone which had hitherto been used by superiors to their subordinates, and by all ranks of officials to the public, was replaced by one of considerate politeness. About the same time those of the Decembrists who were still alive were pardoned. The restrictions regarding the number of students in each university were abolished, the difficulty of obtaining foreign passports was removed, and the Press-censure became singularly indulgent. Though no decided change had been made in the laws, it was universally felt that the spirit of Nicholas was no more.

The public, anxiously seeking after a sign, readily took these symptoms of change as a complete confirmation of their ardent hopes, and leaped at once to the conclusion that a vast, all-embracing system of radical reform was about to be undertaken—not secretly by the Administration, as had been the custom in the preceding reign when any little changes had to be made, but publicly, by the Government and the people in common. "The heart trembles with joy," said one of the leading organs of the Press, "in expectation of the great social reforms that are about to be effected—reforms that are thoroughly in accordance with the spirit, the wishes, and the expectations of the public." "The old harmony and community of feeling," said another, "which has always existed between the Government and the people, save during short exceptional periods, has been fully re-established. The absence of all sentiment of caste, and the feeling of common origin and brotherhood which binds all classes of the Russian people into a homogeneous whole, will enable Russia to accomplish

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peacefully and without effort not only those great reforms which cost Europe centuries of struggle and bloodshed, but also many which the nations of the West are still unable to accomplish, in consequence of feudal traditions and caste prejudices." The past was depicted in the blackest colours, and the nation was called upon to begin a new and glorious epoch of its history. "We have to struggle," it was said, "in the name of the highest truth against egotism and the puny interests of the moment; and we ought to prepare our children from their infancy to take part in that struggle which awaits every honest man. We have to thank the war for opening our eyes to the dark sides of our political and social organisation, and it is now our duty to profit by the lesson. But it must not be supposed that the Government can, single-handed, remedy the defects. The destinies of Russia are, as it were, a stranded vessel which the captain and crew cannot move, and which nothing, indeed, but the rising tide of the national life can raise and float."

Hearts beat quicker at the sound of these calls to action. Many heard this new teaching, if we may believe a contemporary authority, "with tears in their eyes"; then, "raising boldly their heads, they made a solemn vow that they would act honourably, perseveringly, fearlessly." Some of those who had formerly yielded to the force of circumstances now confessed their misdemeanours with bitterness of heart. "Tears of repentance," said a popular poet, "give relief, and call us to new exploits." Russia was compared to a strong giant who awakes from sleep, stretches his brawny limbs, collects his thoughts, and prepares to atone for his long inactivity by feats of untold prowess. All believed, or at least assumed, that the recognition of defects would necessarily entail their removal.

When an actor in one of the St. Petersburg theatres shouted from the stage, "Let us proclaim throughout all Russia that the time has come for tearing up evil by the roots!" the audience gave way to the most frantic enthusiasm. "Altogether a joyful time," says one who took part in the excitement, "as when, after the long winter, the genial breath of spring glides over the cold, petrified earth, and nature awakens from her deathlike sleep. Speech, long restrained by police and censorial regulations, now flows smoothly, majestically, like a mighty river that has just been freed from ice."

Under these influences a multitude of newspapers and periodicals were founded, and the current literature entirely changed its character. The purely literary and historical questions which had hitherto engaged the attention of the reading public were thrown aside and forgotten, unless they could be made to illustrate some principle of political or social science. Criticisms on style and diction, explanations of æsthetic principles, metaphysical discussions—all this seemed miserable trifling to men who wished to devote themselves to gigantic practical interests. "Science," it was said, "has now descended from the heights of philosophic abstraction into the arena of real life." The periodicals were accordingly filled with articles on railways, banks, free trade, education, agriculture, communal institutions, local self-government, joint-stock companies, and with crushing philippics against personal and national vanity, inordinate luxury, administrative tyranny, and the habitual peculation of the officials.

This last-named subject received special attention. During the preceding reign any attempt to criticise publicly the character or acts of an official was regarded as a very heinous offence; now there

was a deluge of sketches, tales, comedies, and monologues, describing the corruption of the Administration, and explaining the ingenious devices by which the *tchinóvniks* increased their scanty salaries. The public would read nothing that had not a direct or indirect bearing on the questions of the day, and whatever had such a bearing was read with interest. It did not seem at all strange that a drama should be written in defence of free trade, or a poem in advocacy of some peculiar mode of taxation; that an author should expound his political ideas in a tale, and his antagonist reply by a comedy. A few men of the old school protested feebly against this "prostitution of art," but they received little attention, and the doctrine that art should be cultivated for its own sake was scouted as an invention of aristocratic indolence. Here is an *ipsa pinxit* of the literature of the time:—"Literature has come to look at Russia with her own eyes, and sees that the idyllic romantic personages which the poets formerly loved to describe have no objective existence. Having taken off her French glove, she offers her hand to the rude, hard-working labourer, and observing lovingly Russian village life, she feels herself in her native land. The writers of the present have analysed the past, and, having separated themselves from aristocratic *littérateurs* and aristocratic society, have demolished their former idols."

By far the most influential periodical at the commencement of the movement was the *Kólokol*, or *Bell*, a fortnightly journal published in London by Herzen, who was at that time an important personage among the political refugees. Herzen was a man of education and culture, with ultra-radical opinions, and not averse to using revolutionary methods of reform when he considered them necessary. His intimate relations

with many of the leading men in Russia enabled him to obtain secret information of the most important and varied kind, and his sparkling wit, biting satire, and clear, terse, brilliant style secured him a large number of readers. He seemed to know everything that was done in the ministries and even in the Cabinet of the Emperor,* and he exposed most mercilessly every abuse that came to his knowledge. We who are accustomed to free political discussion can hardly form a conception of the avidity with which his articles were read, and the effect which they produced. Though strictly prohibited by the Press-censure, the *Kólokol* found its way across the frontier in thousands of copies, and was eagerly perused and commented on by all ranks of the educated classes. The Emperor himself received it regularly, and high-placed delinquents examined it with fear and trembling. In this way Herzen was for some years, though an exile, an important political personage, and did much to awaken and keep up the reform enthusiasm.

But where were the Conservatives all this time? How came it that for two or three years no voice was raised and no protest made even against the rhetorical exaggerations of the new-born liberalism? Where were the representatives of the old *régime*, who had been so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Nicholas? Where were those ministers who had systematically extinguished the least indication of private initiative, those "satraps" who had stamped

* As an illustration of this, the following anecdote is told:—One number of the *Kólokol* contained a violent attack on an important personage of the court, and the accused, or some one of his friends, considered it advisable to have a copy specially printed for the Emperor without the objectionable article. The Emperor did not at first discover the trick, but shortly afterwards he received from London a polite note containing the article which had been omitted, and nforming him how he had been deceived.

out the least symptom of insubordination or discontent, those Press Censors who had diligently suppressed the mildest expression of liberal opinion, those thousands of well-intentioned proprietors who had regarded as dangerous freethinkers and treasonable republicans all who ventured to express dissatisfaction with the existing state of things? A short time before, the Conservatives composed at least nine-tenths of the upper classes, and now they had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared.

It is scarcely necessary to say that in a country accustomed to political life, such a sudden, unopposed revolution in public opinion could not possibly take place. The key to the mystery lies in the fact that for centuries Russia had known nothing of political life or political parties. Those who were sometimes called Conservatives were in reality not at all Conservatives in our sense of the term. If we say that they had a certain amount of Conservatism, we must add that it was of the latent, passive, unreasoned kind—the fruit of indolence and apathy. Their political creed had but one article: Thou shalt love the Tsar with all thy might, and carefully abstain from all resistance to his will—especially when it happens that the Tsar is a man of the Nicholas type. So long as Nicholas lived they had passively acquiesced in his system—active acquiescence had been neither demanded nor desired—but when he died, the system of which he was the soul died with him.

What then could they seek to defend? They were told that the system which they had been taught to regard as the sheet-anchor of the State was in reality the chief cause of the national disasters; and to this they could make no reply, because they had no better explanation of their own to offer. They were convinced that the Russian soldier was the best soldier in

the world, and they knew that in the recent war the army had not been victorious; the system, therefore, must be to blame. They were told that a series of gigantic reforms was necessary in order to restore Russia to her proper place among the nations; and to this they could make no answer, for they had never studied such abstract questions. And one thing they did know: that those who hesitated to admit the necessity of gigantic reforms were branded by the Press as ignorant, narrow-minded, prejudiced, and egotistical, and were held up to derision as men who did not know the most elementary principles of political and economic science. Freely expressed public opinion was such a new phenomenon in Russia that the Press was able for some time to exercise a "Liberal" tyranny scarcely less severe than the "Conservative" tyranny of the censors in the preceding reign. Men who would have stood fire gallantly on the field of battle quailed before the poisoned darts of Herzen in the *Kólokol*. Under such circumstances, even the few who possessed some vague Conservative convictions refrained from publicly expressing them.

The men who had played a more or less active part during the preceding reign, and who might therefore be expected to have clearer and deeper convictions, were specially incapable of offering opposition to the prevailing Liberal enthusiasm. Their Conservatism was of quite as limp a kind as that of the landed proprietors who were not in the public service, for under Nicholas the higher a man was placed the less likely was he to have political convictions of any kind outside the simple political creed above referred to. Besides this, they belonged to that class which was for the moment under the anathema of public opinion, and they had drawn direct personal

advantage from the system which was now recognised as the chief cause of the national disasters.

For a time the name of *tchinóvnik* became a term of reproach and derision, and the position of those who bore it was comically painful. They strove to prove that, though they held a post in the public service, they were entirely free from the *tchinóvnik* spirit—that there was nothing of the genuine *tchinóvnik* about them. Those who had formerly paraded their *tchin* (official rank) on all occasions, in season and out of season, became half ashamed to admit that they had the rank of General; for the title no longer commanded respect, and had become associated with all that was antiquated, formal, and stupid. Among the young generation it was used most disrespectfully as equivalent to "pompous blockhead." Zealous officials who had lately regarded the acquisition of Stars and Orders as among the chief ends of man, were fain to conceal those hard-won trophies, lest some cynical "Liberal" might notice them and make them the butt of his satire. "Look at the depth of humiliation to which you have brought the country" —such was the chorus of reproach that was ever ringing in their ears—"with your red tape, your Chinese formalism, and your principle of lifeless, unreasoning, mechanical obedience! You asserted constantly that you were the only true patriots, and branded with the name of traitor those who warned you of the insane folly of your conduct. You see now what it has all come to. The men whom you helped to send to the mines turn out to have been the true patriots." *

* It was a common saying at that time that nearly all the best men in Russia had spent a part of their lives in Siberia, and it was proposed to publish a biographical dictionary of remarkable men, in which every article was to end thus: "Exiled to —— in 18—." I am not aware how far the project was seriously entertained, but, of course, the book was never published.

And to these reproaches what could they reply? Like a child who has in his frolics inadvertently set the house on fire, they could only look contrite, and say they did not mean it. They had simply accepted without criticism the existing order of things, and ranged themselves among those who were officially recognised as "the well-intentioned." If they had always avoided the Liberals, and perhaps helped to persecute them, it was simply because all "well-intentioned" people said that Liberals were "restless" and dangerous to the State. Those who were not convinced of their errors simply kept silence, but the great majority passed over to the ranks of the Progressists, and many endeavoured to redeem their past by showing extreme zeal for the Liberal cause.

In explanation of this extraordinary outburst of reform enthusiasm, we must further remember that the Russian educated classes, in spite of the severe northern climate which is supposed to make the blood circulate slowly, are extremely impulsive. They are fettered by no venerable historical prejudices, and are wonderfully sensitive to the seductive influence of grandiose projects, especially when these excite the patriotic feelings. Then there was the simple force of reaction—the rebound which naturally followed the terrific compression of the preceding reign. Without disrespect, the Russians of that time may be compared to school-boys who have just escaped from the rigorous discipline of a severe schoolmaster. In the first moments of freedom it was supposed that there would be no more discipline or compulsion. The utmost respect was to be shown to "human dignity," and every Russian was to act spontaneously and zealously at the great work of national regeneration. All thirsted for reforming activity. The men in authority were inundated with projects of reform—some of

them anonymous, and others from obscure individuals; some of them practical, and very many wildly fantastic. Even the grammarians showed their sympathy with the spirit of the time by proposing to expel summarily all redundant letters from the Russian alphabet!

The fact that very few people had clear, precise ideas as to what was to be done did not prevent, but rather tended to increase, the reform enthusiasm. All had at least one common feeling—dislike to what had previously existed. It was only when it became necessary to forsake pure negation, and to create something, that the conceptions became clearer, and a variety of opinions appeared. At the first moment there was merely unanimity in negation, and an impulsive enthusiasm for beneficent reforms in general.

The first specific proposals were direct deductions from the lessons taught by the war. The war had shown in a terrible way the disastrous consequences of having merely primitive means of communication; the Press and the public began, accordingly, to speak about the necessity of constructing railways, roads, and river steamers. The war had shown that a country which has not developed its natural resources very soon becomes exhausted if it has to make a great national effort; accordingly the public and the Press talked about the necessity of developing the natural resources, and about the means by which this desirable end might be attained. It had been shown by the war that a system of education which tends to make men mere apathetic automata cannot produce even a good army; accordingly the public and the Press began to discuss the different systems of education and the numerous questions of pedagogical science. It had been shown by the war that the best intentions of a Government will necessarily be

frustrated if the majority of the officials are dishonest or incapable; accordingly the public and the Press began to speak about the paramount necessity of reforming the Administration in all its branches.

It must not, however, be supposed that in thus laying to heart the lessons taught by the war and endeavouring to profit by them, the Russians were actuated by warlike feelings, and desired to avenge themselves as soon as possible on their victorious enemies. On the contrary, the whole movement and the spirit which animated it were eminently pacific. Prince Gortchakof's saying, "La Russie ne boude pas, elle se recueille," was more than a diplomatic repartee —it was a true and graphic statement of the case. Though the Russians are very inflammable, and can be very violent when their patriotic feelings are aroused, they are, individually and as a nation, singularly free from rancour and the spirit of revenge. After the termination of hostilities they really bore little malice towards the Western Powers, except towards Austria, which was believed to have been treacherous and ungrateful to the country that had saved her in 1849. Their patriotism now took the form, not of revenge, but of a desire to raise their country to the level of the Western nations. If they thought of military matters at all, they assumed that military power would be obtained as a natural and inevitable result of high civilisation and good government.

As a first step towards the realisation of the vast schemes contemplated, voluntary associations began to be formed for industrial and commercial purposes, and a law was issued for the creation of limited liability companies. In the space of two years, forty-seven companies of this kind were founded, with a combined capital of 358 millions of roubles. To understand

the full significance of these figures, we must know that from the founding of the first joint-stock company in 1799 down to 1853 only twenty-six companies had been formed, and their united capital amounted only to thirty-two millions of roubles. Thus in the space of two years (1857–58) eleven times as much capital was subscribed to joint-stock companies as had been subscribed during half a century previous to the war. The most exaggerated expectations were entertained as to the national and private advantages which must necessarily result from these undertakings, and it became a patriotic duty to subscribe liberally. The periodical literature depicted in glowing terms the marvellous results that had been obtained in other countries by the principle of co-operation, and sanguine readers believed that they had discovered a patriotic way of speedily becoming rich.

These were, however, mere secondary matters, and the public were anxiously waiting for the Government to begin the grand reforming campaign. When the educated classes awoke to the necessity of great reforms, there was no clear conception as to how the great work should be undertaken. There was so much to be done that it was no easy matter to decide what should be done first. Administrative, judicial, social, economic, financial, and political reforms seemed all equally pressing. Gradually, however, it became evident that precedence must be given to the question of serfage. It was absurd to speak about progress, humanitarianism, education, self-government, equality in the eye of the law, and similar matters, so long as one-half of the population was excluded from the enjoyment of ordinary civil rights. So long as serfage existed it was mere mockery to talk about reorganising Russia according to the latest results of political and social science. How could a system

of even-handed justice be introduced when twenty millions of the peasantry were subject to the arbitrary will of the landed proprietors? How could agricultural or industrial progress be made without free labour? How could the Government take active measures for the spread of national education when it had no direct control over one-half of the peasantry? Above all, how could it be hoped that a great moral regeneration could take place, so long as the nation voluntarily retained the stigma of serfage and slavery?

All this was very generally felt by the educated classes, but no one ventured to raise the question until it should be known what were the views of the Emperor on the subject. How the question was gradually raised, how it was treated by the nobles, and how it was ultimately solved by the famous law of February 19th (March 3rd), 1861,* I now propose to relate.

* February 19th according to the old style, which is still used in Russia, and March 3rd according to our method of reckoning.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SERFS.

The Rural Population in Ancient Times—The Peasantry in the Eighteenth Century—How was this Change effected?—The Common Explanation Inaccurate—Serfage the Result of Permanent Economic and Political Causes—Origin of the *Adscriptio Glebæ*—Its Consequences—Serf Insurrection—Turning-point in the History of Serfage—Serfage in Russia and in Western Europe—State Peasants—Numbers and Geographical Distribution of the Serf Population—Serf Dues—Legal and Actual Power of the Proprietors—The Serfs' Means of Defence—Fugitives—Domestic Serfs—Strange Advertisements in the *Moscow Gazette*—Moral Influence of Serfage.

BEFORE proceeding to describe the Emancipation, it may be well to explain briefly how the Russian peasants became serfs, and what serfage in Russia really was.

In the earliest period of Russian history the rural population was composed of three distinct classes. At the bottom of the scale stood the slaves, who were very numerous. Their numbers were continually augmented by prisoners of war, by freemen who voluntarily sold themselves as slaves, by insolvent debtors, and by certain categories of criminals. Immediately above the slaves were the free agricultural labourers, who had no permanent domicile, but wandered about the country and settled temporarily where they happened to find work and satisfactory remuneration. In the third place, distinct from these two classes, and in some respects higher in the social scale, were the peasants properly so called.*

These peasants proper, who may be roughly described as small farmers or cottiers, were distin-

* My chief authority for the early history of the peasantry has been Bêlâef, "Krestyânye na Rusi," Moscow, 1860; a most able and conscientious work.

guished from the free agricultural labourers in two respects: they were possessors of land in property or usufruct, and they were members of a rural Commune. The Communes were free primitive corporations which elected their office-bearers from among the heads of families, and sent delegates to act as judges or assessors in the Prince's Court. Some of the Communes possessed land of their own, whilst others were settled on the estates of the landed proprietors or on the extensive domains of the monasteries. In the latter case the peasant paid a fixed yearly rent in money, in produce, or in labour, according to the terms of his contract with the proprietor or the monastery; but he did not thereby sacrifice in any way his personal liberty. As soon as he had fulfilled the engagements stipulated in the contract and had settled accounts with the owner of the land, he was free to change his domicile as he pleased.

If we turn now from these early times to the eighteenth century, we find that the position of the rural population has entirely changed in the interval. The distinction between slaves, agricultural labourers, and peasants has completely disappeared. All three categories have melted together into a common class, called serfs, who are regarded as the property of the landed proprietors or of the State. "The proprietors sell their peasants and domestic servants not even in families, but one by one, like cattle, as is done nowhere else in the whole world, from which practice there is not a little wailing." * And yet the Government, whilst professing to regret the existence of the practice, takes no energetic measures to prevent it. On the contrary, it deprives the serfs of all legal

* These words are taken from an Imperial ukaz of April 15th, 1721. Pólnoye Sobránye Zakónov, No. 3,770.

protection, and expressly commands that if any serf shall dare to present a petition against his master, he shall be punished with the knout and transported for life to the mines of Nertchinsk. (Ukaz of August 22nd, 1767.)*

How did this important change take place, and how is it to be explained?

If we ask any educated Russian who has never specially occupied himself with historical investigations regarding the origin of serfage in Russia, he will probably reply somewhat in this fashion: "In Russia slavery has never existed (!), and even serfage in the West-European sense has never been recognised by law! In ancient times the rural population was completely free, and every peasant might change his domicile on St. George's Day—that is to say, at the end of the agricultural year. This right of migration was abolished by Tsar Boris Godunóf—who, by the way, was half a Tartar and more than half a usurper—and herein lies the essence of serfage in the Russian sense. The peasants have never been the property of the landed proprietors, but have always been personally free; and the only legal restriction on their liberty was that they were not allowed to change their domicile without the permission of the proprietor. If so-called serfs were sometimes sold, the practice was simply an abuse not justified by legislation."

This simple explanation, in which may be detected a note of patriotic pride, is almost universally accepted in Russia; but it contains, like most popular conceptions of the distant past, a curious mixture of fact and fiction. Serious historical investigation tends to show that the power of the proprietors over the peasants

* This is a ukaz of the liberal and tolerant Catherine! How she reconciled it with her respect and admiration for Beccaria's humane views on criminal law she does not explain.

came into existence, not suddenly, as the result of a ukaz, but gradually, as a consequence of permanent economic and political causes, and that Boris Godunóf was not more to blame than many of his predecessors and successors.*

Although the peasants in ancient Russia were free to wander about as they chose, there appeared at a very early period—long before the reign of Boris Godunóf—a decided tendency in the princes, in the proprietors, and in the Communes, to prevent migration. This tendency will be easily understood if we remember that land without labourers is useless, and that in Russia at that time the population was small in comparison with the amount of reclaimed and easily reclaimable land. The prince desired to have as many inhabitants as possible in his principality, because the amount of his regular revenues depended on the number of the population. The landed proprietor desired to have as many peasants as possible on his estate, to till for him the land which he reserved for his own use, and to pay him for the remainder a yearly rent in money, produce, or labour. The free Communes desired to have a number of members sufficient to keep the whole of the Communal land under cultivation, because each Commune had to pay yearly to the prince a fixed sum in money or agricultural produce, and the greater the number of able-bodied members, the less each individual had to pay. To use the language of political economy, the princes, the landed proprietors, and the free Communes all appeared as buyers in the labour market; and the demand was far in excess of the supply.

* See especially Pobêdonostsef, in the *Rússki Vêstnik*, 1858, No. 11, and "Istorítcheskiya izslêdovaniya i statyí" (St. Petersburg, 1876), by the same author; also Pogódin, in the *Rússkaya Besêda*, 1858, No. 4.

Nowadays, when young colonies or landed proprietors in an outlying corner of the world are similarly in need of labour, they seek to supply the want by organising a regular system of importing labourers — using illegal violent means, such as kidnapping expeditions, merely as an exceptional expedient. In old Russia any such regularly organised system was impossible, and consequently illegal or violent measures were not the exception, but the rule. The chief practical advantage of the frequent military expeditions for those who took part in them was the acquisition of prisoners of war, who were commonly transformed into slaves by their captors. If it be true, as some assert, that only unbaptised prisoners were legally considered lawful booty, it is certain that in practice before the unification of the principalities under the Tsars of Moscow, little distinction was made in this respect between unbaptised foreigners and Orthodox Russians.* A similar method was sometimes employed for the acquisition of free peasants: the more powerful proprietors organised kidnapping expeditions, and carried off by force the peasants settled on the land of their weaker neighbours.

Under these circumstances it was only natural that those who possessed this valuable commodity should do all in their power to keep it. Many, if not all, of the free Communes adopted the simple measure of refusing to allow a member to depart until he had found someone to take his place. The proprietors never, so far as we know, laid down formally such a principle, but in practice they did all in their power to retain the peasants actually

* On this subject see Tchitchérin, "Ópyty po istórii Rússkago práva," Moscow, 1858, p. 162 *et seq.*; and Lokhvitski, "O plênnykh po drévnemu Rússkomu právu," Moscow, 1855.

settled on their estates. For this purpose some simply employed force, whilst others acted under cover of legal formalities. The peasant who accepted land from a proprietor rarely brought with him the necessary implements, cattle, and capital to begin at once his occupations, and to feed himself and his family till the ensuing harvest. He was obliged, therefore, to borrow from his landlord, and the debt thus contracted was easily converted into a means of preventing his departure if he wished to change his domicile. We need not enter into further details. The proprietors were the capitalists of the time. Frequent bad harvests, plagues, fires, military raids, and similar misfortunes, often reduced even prosperous peasants to beggary. The muzhik was probably then, as now, only too ready to accept a loan without taking the necessary precautions for repaying it. The laws relating to debt were terribly severe, and there was no powerful judicial organisation to protect the weak. If we remember all this, we shall not be surprised to learn that a considerable part of the peasantry were practically serfs before serfage was recognised by law.

So long as the country was broken up into independent principalities, and each landowner was almost an independent prince on his estate, the peasants easily found a remedy for these abuses in flight. They fled to a neighbouring proprietor who could protect them from their former landlord and his claims, or they took refuge in a neighbouring principality, where they were, of course, still safer. All this was changed when the independent principalities were transformed into the Tsardom of Muscovy. The Tsars had new reasons for opposing the migration of the peasants and new means for preventing it. The old princes had simply given grants of

land to those who served them, and left the grantee to do with his land what seemed good to him; the Tsars, on the contrary, gave to those who served them merely the usufruct of a certain quantity of land, and carefully proportioned the quantity to the rank and the obligations of the receiver.

In this change there was plainly a new reason for fixing the peasants to the soil. The real value of a grant depended not so much on the amount of land as on the number of peasants settled on it, and hence any migration of the population was tantamount to a removal of the ancient landmarks—that is to say, to a disturbance of the arrangements made by the Tsar. Suppose, for instance, that the Tsar granted to a *Boyár* or some lesser dignitary an estate on which were settled twenty peasant families, and that afterwards ten of these emigrated to neighbouring proprietors. In this case the recipient might justly complain that he had lost half of his estate—though the amount of land was in no way diminished—and that he was consequently unable to fulfil his obligations. Such complaints would be rarely, if ever, made by the great dignitaries, for they had the means of attracting peasants to their estates;* but the small proprietors had good reason to complain, and the Tsar was bound to remove their grievances. The attaching of the peasants to the soil was, in fact, the natural consequence of feudal tenures—an integral part of the Muscovite political system. The Tsar compelled the nobles to

* There are plain indications in the documents of the time that the great dignitaries were at first hostile to the *adscriptio glebæ*. We find a similar phenomenon at a much more recent date in Little Russia. Long after serfage had been legalised in that region by Catherine II., the great proprietors, such as Rumyantsef, Razumofski, Bezborodko, continued to attract to their estates the peasants of the smaller proprietors. See the article of Pogódin in the *Rússkaya Besêda*, 1858, No. 4, p. 154.

serve him, and was unable to pay them in money. He was obliged, therefore, to procure for them some other means of livelihood. Evidently the simplest method of solving the difficulty was to give them land, with a certain number of labourers, and to prevent the labourers from migrating.

Towards the free Communes the Tsars had to act in the same way for similar reasons. The Communes, like the nobles, had obligations to the Sovereign, and could not fulfil them if the peasants were allowed to migrate from one locality to another. They were, in a certain sense, the property of the Tsar, and it was only natural that the Tsar should do for himself what he had done for his nobles.

With these new reasons for fixing the peasants to the soil came, as has been said, new means of preventing migration. Formerly it was an easy matter to flee to a neighbouring principality, but now all the principalities were combined under one ruler, and the foundations of a centralised administration were laid. Severe fugitive laws were issued against those who attempted to change their domicile and against the proprietors who should harbour the runaways. Unless the peasant chose to face the difficulties of "squatting" in the inhospitable northern forests, or resolved to brave the dangers of the Steppe, he could nowhere escape the heavy hand of Moscow.*

The indirect consequences of thus attaching the peasants to the soil did not at once become apparent. The serf retained all the civil rights he had hitherto

* The above account of the origin of serfage in Russia is founded on a careful examination of the evidence which we possess on the subject, but I must not conceal the fact that some of the statements are founded on inference rather than on direct, unequivocal documentary evidence. The whole question is one of great difficulty, and will in all probability not be satisfactorily solved until a large number of the old local Land-Registers (*Pistsóviya Knigi*) have been published and carefully studied.

enjoyed, except that of changing his domicile. He could still appear before the courts of law as a free man, freely engage in trade or industry, enter into all manner of contracts, and rent land for cultivation.

But as time wore on, the change in the legal relation between the two classes became apparent in real life. In attaching the peasantry to the soil, the Government had been so thoroughly engrossed with the direct financial aim that it entirely overlooked, or wilfully shut its eyes to, the ulterior consequences which must necessarily flow from the policy it adopted. It was evident that as soon as the relation between proprietor and peasant was removed from the region of voluntary contract by being rendered indissoluble, the weaker of the two parties legally tied together must fall completely under the power of the stronger unless energetically protected by the law and the Administration. To this inevitable consequence the Government paid no attention. So far from endeavouring to protect the peasantry from the oppression of the proprietors, it did not even determine by law the mutual obligations which ought to exist between the two classes. Taking advantage of this omission, the proprietors soon began to impose whatever obligations they thought fit; and as they had no legal means of enforcing fulfilment, they gradually introduced a patriarchal jurisdiction similar to that which they exercised over their slaves, with fines and corporal punishment as means of coercion. From this they ere long proceeded a step further, and began to sell their peasants without the land on which they were settled. At first this was merely a flagrant abuse unsanctioned by law, for the peasant had never been declared the private property of the landed proprietor; but the Government tacitly sanctioned the practice, and even exacted dues on such sales, as on the sale of slaves.

Finally the right to sell peasants without land was formally recognised by various Imperial ukazes.*

The old Communal organisation still existed on the estates of the proprietors, and had never been legally deprived of its authority, but it was now powerless to protect the members. The proprietor could easily overcome any active resistance by selling or converting into domestic servants the peasants who dared to oppose his will.

The peasantry had thus sunk to the condition of serfs, practically deprived of legal protection and subject to the arbitrary will of the proprietors; but they were still in some respects legally and actually distinguished from the slaves on the one hand and the "free wandering people" on the other. These distinctions were obliterated by Peter the Great and his immediate successors.

To effect his great civil and military reforms, Peter required an annual revenue such as his predecessors had never dreamed of, and he was consequently always on the look-out for some new object of taxation. When looking about for this purpose, his eye naturally fell on the slaves, the domestic servants, and the free agricultural labourers. None of these classes paid taxes—a fact which stood in flagrant contradiction with his fundamental principle of polity, that every subject should in some way serve the State. He caused, therefore, a national census to be taken, in which all the various classes of the rural population—slaves, domestic servants, agricultural labourers, peasants—should be inscribed in one category; and he imposed equally on all the members of this category a poll-tax, in lieu of the former land-tax, which had lain exclusively on the peasants. To

* For instance, the ukazes of October 13th, 1675, and June 25th, 1682. See Bèlàef, pp. 203–209.

facilitate the collection of this tax the proprietors were made responsible for their serfs; and the "free wandering people" who did not wish to enter the army were ordered, under pain of being sent to the galleys, to inscribe themselves as members of a Commune or as serfs to some proprietor.

These measures had a considerable influence, if not on the actual position of the peasantry, at least on the legal conceptions regarding them. By making the proprietor pay the poll-tax for his serfs, as if they were slaves or cattle, the law seemed to sanction the idea that they were part of his goods and chattels. Besides this, it introduced the entirely new principle that any member of the rural population not legally attached to the land or to a proprietor should be regarded as a vagrant, and treated accordingly. Thus the principle that every subject should in some way serve the State had found its complete realisation. There was no longer any room in Russia for free men.

The change in the position of the peasantry, together with the hardships and oppression by which it was accompanied, naturally increased fugitivism and vagrancy. Thousands of serfs ran away from their masters, and fled to the Steppe or sought enrolment in the army. To prevent this the Government considered it necessary to take severe and energetic measures. The serfs were forbidden to enlist without the permission of their masters, and those who persisted in presenting themselves for enrolment were to be beaten "cruelly" (*zhestóko*) with the knout, and sent to the mines.* The proprietors, on the other hand, received the right to transport without trial their unruly serfs to Siberia, and even to send them to the mines for life.†

* Ukaz of June 2nd, 1742.

† See ukaz of January 17th, 1765, and of January 28th, 1766.

If these stringent measures had any effect it was not of long duration, for there soon appeared among the serfs a still stronger spirit of discontent and insubordination, which threatened to produce a general agrarian rising, and actually did create a movement resembling in many respects the Jacquerie in France and the Peasant War in Germany. A glance at the causes of this movement will help us to understand the real nature of serfage in Russia.

Up to this point serfage had, in spite of its flagrant abuses, a certain theoretical justification. It was, as we have seen, merely a part of a general political system in which obligatory service was imposed on all classes of the population. The serfs served the nobles in order that the nobles might serve the Tsar. In 1762 this theory was entirely overturned by a manifesto of Peter III. abolishing the obligatory service of the Noblesse. According to strict justice this act ought to have been followed by the liberation of the serfs, for if the nobles were no longer obliged to serve the State they had no just claim to the service of the peasants. The Government had so completely forgotten the original meaning of serfage that it never thought of carrying out the measure to its logical consequences, but the peasantry held tenaciously to the ancient conceptions, and looked impatiently for a second manifesto liberating them from the power of the proprietors. Reports were spread that such a manifesto really existed, and was being concealed by the nobles. A spirit of insubordination accordingly appeared among the rural population, and local insurrections broke out in several parts of the Empire.

At this critical moment Peter III. was dethroned and assassinated by a Court conspiracy. The peasants, who of course knew nothing of the real motives of the

conspirators, supposed that the Tsar had been assassinated by those who wished to preserve serfage, and believed him to be a martyr in the cause of Emancipation. At the news of the catastrophe their hopes of Emancipation fell, but soon they were revived by new rumours. The Tsar, it was said, had escaped from the conspirators and was in hiding. Soon he would appear among his faithful peasants, and with their aid would regain his throne and punish the wicked oppressors. Anxiously he was awaited, and at last the glad tidings came that he had appeared in the Don country, that thousands of Cossacks had joined his standard, that he was everywhere putting the proprietors to death without mercy, and that he would soon arrive in the ancient capital!

Peter III. was in reality in his grave, but there was a terrible element of truth in these reports. A pretender, a Cossack called Pugatchéf, had really appeared on the Don, and had assumed the rôle which the peasants expected the late Tsar to play. Advancing through the country of the Lower Volga, he took several places of importance, put to death all the proprietors he could find, defeated on more than one occasion the troops sent against him, and threatened to advance into the heart of the Empire. It seemed as if the old troublous times were about to be renewed—as if the country was once more to be pillaged by those wild Cossacks of the Southern Steppe. But the pretender showed himself incapable of playing the part he had assumed. His inhuman cruelty estranged many who would otherwise have followed him, and he was too deficient in decision and energy to take advantage of favourable circumstances. If it be true that he conceived the idea of creating a peasant empire (*muzhítskoe tsárstvo*), he was not the man to realise such a scheme. After a series of mistakes and

defeats he was taken prisoner, and the insurrection was quelled.*

Meanwhile Peter III. had been succeeded by his consort, Catherine II. As she had no legal right to the throne, and was by birth a foreigner, she could not gain the affections of the people, and was obliged to court the favour of the Noblesse. In such a difficult position she could not venture to apply her humane principles to the question of serfage. Even during the first years of her reign, when she had no reason to fear agrarian disturbances, she increased rather than diminished the power of the proprietors over their serfs, and the Pugatchéf affair confirmed her in this line of policy. During her reign serfage may be said to have reached its climax. The serfs were regarded by the law as part of the master's immovable property† —as part of the working capital of the estate—and as such they were bought, sold, and given as presents‡ in hundreds and thousands, sometimes with the land, and sometimes without it, sometimes in families, and sometimes individually. The only legal restriction was that they should not be offered for sale at the time of the conscription, and that they should at no time be sold publicly by auction, because such a custom was considered as "unbecoming in a European State." In all other respects the serfs might be

* Whilst living among the Bashkirs of the province of Samára in 1872, I found some interesting traditions regarding this pretender. Though nearly a century had elapsed since his death (1775), his name, his personal appearance, and his exploits were well known even to the younger generation. My informants firmly believed that he was not an impostor, but the genuine Tsar, dethroned by his ambitious consort, and that he never was taken prisoner, but "went away into foreign lands." When I asked whether he was still alive, and whether he might not one day return, they replied that they did not know.

† See ukaz of October 7th, 1792.

‡ As an example of making presents of serfs, the following may be cited: Count Panin presented some of his subordinates for an Imperial recompense, and on receiving a refusal, made them a present of 4,000 serfs from his own estates.—Bêláef, p. 320.

treated as private property; and this view is to be found not only in the legislation, but also in the popular conceptions. It became customary—a custom that continued down to the year 1861—to compute a noble's fortune, not by his yearly revenue or the extent of his estate, but by the number of his serfs. Instead of saying that a man had so many hundreds or thousands a year, or so many acres, it was commonly said that he had so many hundreds or thousands of "souls." And over these "souls" he exercised the most unlimited authority. The serfs had no legal means of self-defence. The Government feared that the granting to them of judicial or administrative protection would inevitably awaken in them a spirit of insubordination, and hence it was ordered that those who presented complaints should be punished with the knout and sent to the mines.* It was only in extreme cases, when some instance of atrocious cruelty happened to reach the ears of the Sovereign, that the authorities interfered with the proprietor's jurisdiction, and these cases had not the slightest influence on the proprietors in general.†

The last years of the eighteenth century may be regarded as the turning point in the history of serfage. Up till that time the power of the proprietors had steadily increased, and the area of serfage had rapidly expanded. Under the Emperor Paul (1796–1801) we find the first decided symptoms of a reaction. He

* See the ukazes of August 22nd, 1767, and March 30th, 1781.

† Perhaps the most horrible case on record is that of a certain lady called Saltykóf, who was brought to justice in 1768. According to the ukaz regarding her crimes, she had killed by inhuman tortures in the course of ten or eleven years about a hundred of her serfs, chiefly of the female sex, and among them several young girls of eleven and twelve years of age. According to popular belief her cruelty proceeded from cannibal propensities, but this was not confirmed by the judicial investigation. Details in the *Rússki Arkhiv*, 1865, pp. 644–652. The atrocities practised on the estate of Count Araktchéyef, the favourite of Alexander I., at the commencement of last century, have been frequently described, and are scarcely less revolting.

regarded the proprietors as his most efficient officers of police, but he desired to limit their authority, and for this purpose issued a ukaz to the effect that the serfs should not be forced to work for their masters more than three days in the week. With the accession of Alexander I., in 1801, commenced a long series of abortive projects for a general emancipation, and endless attempts to correct the more glaring abuses; and during the reign of Nicholas no less than six committees were formed at different times to consider the question. But the practical result of these efforts was extremely small. The custom of giving grants of land with peasants was abolished; certain slight restrictions were placed on the authority of the proprietors; a number of the worst specimens of the class were removed from the administration of their estates; a few who were convicted of atrocious cruelty were exiled to Siberia; * and some thousands of serfs were actually emancipated; but no decisive radical measures were attempted, and the serfs did not receive even the right of making formal complaints. Serfage had, in fact, come to be regarded as a vital part of the State organisation, and the only sure basis for autocracy. It was therefore treated tenderly, and the rights and protection accorded by various ukazes were almost entirely illusory.

If we compare the development of serfage in Russia and in Western Europe, we find very many points in common, but in Russia the movement had certain peculiarities. One of the most important of these was caused by the rapid development of the Autocratic

* Speranski, for instance, when Governor of the province of Penza, brought to justice, among others, a proprietor who had caused one of his serfs to be flogged to death, and a lady who had murdered a serf boy by pricking him with a pen-knife because he had neglected to take proper care of a tame rabbit committed to his charge!—Korff, "Zhizn Speránskago," II., p. 127, note.

Power. In feudal Europe, where there was no strong central authority to control the Noblesse, the free rural Communes entirely, or almost entirely, disappeared. They were either appropriated by the nobles or voluntarily submitted to powerful landed proprietors or to monasteries, and in this way the whole of the reclaimed land, with a few rare exceptions, became the property of the nobles or of the Church. In Russia we find the same movement, but it was arrested by the Imperial power before all the land had been appropriated. The nobles could reduce to serfage the peasants settled on their estates, but they could not take possession of the free Communes, because such an appropriation would have infringed the rights and diminished the revenues of the Tsar. Down to the commencement of the last century, it is true, large grants of land with serfs were made to favoured individuals among the Noblesse, and in the reign of Paul (1796—1801) a considerable number of estates were affected to the use of the Imperial family under the name of appanages (*Udyélniya iméniya*); but on the other hand, the extensive Church lands, when secularised by Catherine II., were not distributed among the nobles, as in many other countries, but were transformed into State Domains. Thus, at the date of the Emancipation (1861), by far the greater part of the territory belonged to the State, and one-half of the rural population were so-called State Peasants (*Gosudárstvenniye krestyanye*).

Regarding the condition of these State Peasants, or Peasants of the Domains, as they are sometimes called, I may say briefly that they were, in a certain sense, serfs, being attached to the soil like the others; but their condition was, as a rule, somewhat better than the serfs in the narrower acceptation of the term. They had to suffer much from the tyranny and extortion of

the special administration under which they lived, but they had more land and more liberty than was commonly enjoyed on the estates of resident proprietors, and their position was much less precarious. It is often asserted that the officials of the Domains were worse than the serf-owners, because they had not the same interest in the prosperity of the peasantry; but this *à priori* reasoning does not stand the test of experience.

It is not a little interesting to observe the numerical proportion and geographical distribution of these two rural classes. In European Russia, as a whole, about three-eighths of the population were composed of serfs belonging to the nobles;* but if we take the provinces separately we find great variations from this average. In five provinces the serfs were less than three per cent., whilst in others they formed more than seventy per cent. of the population! This is not an accidental phenomenon. In the geographical distribution of serfage we can see reflected the origin and history of the institution.

If we were to construct a map showing the geographical distribution of the serf population, we should at once perceive that serfage radiated from Moscow. Starting from that city as a centre and travelling in any direction towards the confines of the Empire, we find that, after making allowance for a few disturbing local influences, the proportion of serfs regularly declines in the successive provinces traversed. In the

* The exact numbers, according to official data, were—

Entire Population	60,909,309
Peasantry of all Classes	49,486,665
Of these latter there were—	
State Peasants	23,138,191
Peasants on the Lands of Proprietors	23,022,390
Peasants of the Appanages and other Departments	3,326,084
	49,486,665

region representing the old Muscovite Tsardom they form considerably more than half of the rural population. Immediately to the south and east of this, in the territory that was gradually annexed during the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, the proportion varies from twenty-five to fifty per cent., and in the more recently annexed provinces it steadily decreases till it almost reaches zero.

We may perceive, too, that the percentage of serfs decreases towards the north much more rapidly than towards the east and south. This points to the essentially agricultural nature of serfage in its infancy. In the south and east there was abundance of rich "black earth" celebrated for its fertility, and the nobles in quest of estates naturally preferred this region to the inhospitable north, with its poor soil and severe climate.

A more careful examination of the supposed map* would bring out other interesting facts. Let me notice one by way of illustration. Had serfage been the result of conquest we should have found the Slavonic race settled on the State Domains, and the Finnish and Tartar tribes supplying the serfs of the nobles. In reality we find quite the reverse; the Finns and Tartars were nearly all State Peasants, and the serfs of the proprietors were nearly all of Slavonic race. This is to be accounted for by the fact that the Finnish and Tartar tribes inhabit chiefly the outlying regions, in which serfage never attained such dimensions as in the centre of the Empire.

The dues paid by the serfs were of three kinds: labour, money, and farm produce. The last-named is so unimportant that it may be dismissed in a few

* Such a map was actually constructed by Troinitski ("Krêpostnóe Naselêniye v Rossíi," St. Petersburg, 1861), but it is not nearly so graphic as it might have been.

words. It consisted chiefly of eggs, chickens, lambs, mushrooms, wild berries, and linen cloth. The amount of these various products depended entirely on the will of the master. The other two kinds of dues, as more important, we must examine more closely.

When a proprietor had abundance of fertile land and wished to farm on his own account, he commonly demanded from his serfs as much labour as possible. Under such a master the serfs were probably free from money dues, and fulfilled their obligations to him by labouring in his fields in summer and transporting his grain to market in winter. When, on the contrary, a landowner had more serf labour at his disposal than he required for the cultivation of his fields, he put the superfluous serfs "on *obrók*"—that is to say, he allowed them to go and work where they pleased on condition of paying him a fixed yearly sum. Sometimes the proprietor did not farm at all on his own account, in which case he put all the serfs "on *obrók*," and generally gave to the Commune in usufruct the whole of the arable land and pasturage. In this way the *Mir* played the part of a tenant.

We have here the basis for a simple and important classification of estates in the time of serfage: (1) Estates on which the dues were exclusively in labour; (2) Estates on which the dues were partly in labour and partly in money; and (3) Estates on which the dues were exclusively in money.

In the manner of exacting the labour dues there was considerable variety. According to the famous manifesto of Paul I., the peasant could not be compelled to work more than three days in the week; but this law was by no means universally observed, and those who did observe it had various methods of applying it. A few took it literally, and laid down a rule that the serfs should work for them three definite

days in the week—for example, every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday—but this was an extremely inconvenient method, for it prevented the field labour from being carried on regularly. A much more rational system was that according to which one-half of the serfs worked the first three days of the week, and the other half the remaining three. In this way there was, without any contravention of the law, a regular and constant supply of labour. It seems, however, that the great majority of the proprietors followed no strict method, and paid no attention whatever to Paul's manifesto, which gave to the peasant no legal means of making formal complaints. They simply summoned daily as many labourers as they required. The evil consequences of this for the peasants' crops were in part counteracted by making the peasants sow their own grain a little later than that of the proprietor, so that the master's harvest-work was finished, or nearly finished, before their grain was ripe. This combination did not, however, always succeed, and in cases where there was a conflict of interests, the serf was, of course, the losing party. All that remained for him to do in such cases was to work a little in his own fields before six o'clock in the morning and after nine o'clock at night, and in order to render this possible, he economised his strength, and worked as little as possible in his master's fields during the day.

It has frequently been remarked, and with much truth—though the indiscriminate application of the principle has often led to unjustifiable legislative inactivity—that the practical result of institutions depends less on the intrinsic abstract nature of the institutions themselves than on the character of those who work them. So it was with serfage. When a proprietor habitually acted towards his serfs in an

enlightened, rational, humane way, they had little reason to complain of their position, and their life was much easier than that of many men who live in a state of complete individual freedom and unlimited, unrestricted competition. However paradoxical the statement may seem to those who are in the habit of regarding all forms of slavery from the sentimental point of view, it is unquestionable that the condition of serfs under such a proprietor as I have supposed was more enviable than that of the majority of English agricultural labourers. Each family had a house of its own, with a cabbage garden, one or more horses, one or two cows, several sheep, poultry, agricultural implements, a share of the Communal land, and everything else necessary for carrying on its small farming operations; and in return for this it had to supply the proprietor with an amount of labour which was by no means oppressive. If, for instance, a serf had three adult sons—and the households, as I have said, were at that time generally numerous—two of them might work for the proprietor, whilst he himself and the remaining son could attend exclusively to the family affairs. By the events which used to be called "the visitations of God" he had no fear of being permanently ruined. If his house was burnt, or his cattle died from the plague, or a series of "bad years" left him without seed for his fields, he could always count upon temporary assistance from his master. He was protected, too, against all oppression and exactions on the part of the officials: for the police, when there was any cause for its interference, applied to the proprietor, who was to a certain extent responsible for his serfs. Thus the serf might live a tranquil, contented life, and die at a ripe old age, without ever having been conscious that serfage was a grievous burden.

If all the serfs had lived in this way we might, perhaps, regret that the emancipation was ever undertaken. In reality there was, as the French say, *le revers de la médaille*, and serfage generally appeared under a form very different from that which I have just depicted. The proprietors were, unfortunately, not all of the enlightened, humane type. Amongst them were many who demanded from their serfs an inordinate amount of labour, and treated them in a very inhumane fashion.

These oppressors of their serfs may be divided into four categories. First, there were the proprietors who managed their own estates, and oppressed simply for the purpose of increasing their revenues. Secondly, there were a number of retired officers, who wished to establish a certain order and discipline on their estates, and who employed for this purpose the barbarous measures which were at that time used in the army, believing that merciless corporal punishment was the only means of curing laziness, disorderliness and other vices. Thirdly, there were the absentees who lived beyond their means, and demanded from their steward, under pain of giving him or his son as a recruit, a much greater yearly sum than the estate could be reasonably expected to yield. Lastly, in the latter years of serfage, there were a number of men who bought estates as a mercantile speculation, and made as much money out of them as they could in the shortest possible space of time.

Of all hard masters, the last-named were the most terrible. Utterly indifferent to the welfare of the serfs and the ultimate fate of the property, they cut down the timber, sold the cattle, exacted heavy money dues under threats of giving the serfs or their children as recruits, presented to the military authorities a number of conscripts greater than was required by

law—selling the conscription receipts (*zatchétniya kvitántsii*) to the merchants and burghers who were liable to the conscription but did not wish to serve—compelled some of the richer serfs to buy their liberty at an enormous price, and, in a word, used every means, legal and illegal, for extracting money. By this system of management they ruined the estate completely in the course of a few years; but by that time they had realised probably the whole sum paid, with a very fair profit from the operation; and this profit could be considerably augmented by selling a number of the peasant families for transportation to another estate (*na svoz*), or by mortgaging the property in the Opekúnski Sovêt—a Government institution which lent money on landed property without examining carefully the nature of the security.

As to the means which the proprietors possessed of oppressing their peasants, we must distinguish between the legal and the actual. The legal were almost as complete as anyone could desire. "The proprietor," it is said in the Laws (Vol. IX., § 1045, ed. an. 1857), "may impose on his serfs every kind of labour, may take from them money dues (*obrók*) and demand from them personal service, with this one restriction, that they should not be thereby ruined, and that the number of days fixed by law should be left to them for their own work."* Besides this, he had the right to transform peasants into domestic servants, and might, instead of employing them in his own service, hire them out to others who had the rights and privileges of Noblesse (§ § 1047—48). For all offences committed against himself or against anyone under his jurisdiction he could subject the guilty ones to corporal

* I give here the references to the Code, because Russians commonly believe and assert that the hiring out of serfs, the infliction of corporal punishment, and similar practices were merely abuses unauthorised by law.

punishment not exceeding forty lashes with the birch or fifteen blows with the stick (§ 1052); and if he considered any of his serfs as incorrigible he could present them to the authorities to be drafted into the army or transported to Siberia, as he might desire (§ § 1053—55). In cases of insubordination, where the ordinary domestic means of discipline did not suffice, he could call in the police and the military to support his authority.

Such were the legal means by which the proprietor might oppress his peasants, and it will be readily understood that they were very considerable and very elastic. By law he had the power to impose any dues in labour or money which he might think fit, and in all cases the serfs were ordered to be docile and obedient (§ 1027). Corporal punishment, though restricted by law, he could in reality apply to any extent. Certainly none of the serfs, and very few of the proprietors, were aware that the law placed any restriction on this right. All the proprietors were in the habit of using corporal punishment as they thought proper, and unless a proprietor became notorious for inhuman cruelty, the authorities never thought of interfering. But in the eyes of the peasants, corporal punishment was not the worst. What they feared infinitely more than the birch or the stick was the proprietor's power of giving them or their sons as recruits. The law assumed that this extreme means would be employed only against those serfs who showed themselves incorrigibly vicious or insubordinate; but the authorities accepted those presented without making any investigations, and consequently the proprietor might use this power as an effective means of extortion.

Against these means of extortion and oppression the serfs had no legal protection. The law provided

them with no means of resisting any injustice to which they might be subjected, or of bringing to punishment the master who oppressed and ruined them. The Government, notwithstanding its sincere desire to protect them from inordinate burdens and cruel treatment, rarely interfered between the master and his serfs, being afraid of thereby undermining the authority of the proprietors, and awakening among the peasantry a spirit of insubordination. The serfs were left, therefore, to their own resources, and had to defend themselves as they best could. The simplest way was open mutiny; but this was rarely employed, for they knew by experience that any attempt of the kind would be at once put down by the military and mercilessly punished. Much more favourite and efficient methods were passive resistance, flight, and fire-raising or murder.

We might naturally suppose that an unscrupulous proprietor, armed with the enormous legal and actual power which I have just described, could very easily extort from his peasants anything he desired. In reality, however, the process of extortion, when it exceeded a certain measure, was a very difficult operation. The Russian peasant has a capacity of patient endurance that would do honour to a martyr, and a power of continued, dogged, passive resistance such as is possessed, I believe, by no other class of men in Europe; and these qualities formed a very powerful barrier against the rapacity of unconscientious proprietors. As soon as the serfs remarked in their master a tendency to rapacity and extortion, they at once took measures to defend themselves. Their first step was to sell secretly the live-stock they did not actually require, and all their movable property, except the few articles necessary for everyday use; then the little capital so realised was carefully hidden.

When this had been effected, the proprietor might threaten and punish as he liked, but he rarely succeeded in unearthing the treasure. Many a peasant, under such circumstances, bore patiently the most cruel punishment, and saw his sons taken away as recruits, and yet he persisted in declaring that he had no money to ransom himself and his children. A spectator in such a case would probably have advised him to give up his little store of money, and thereby liberate himself from persecution; but the peasants reasoned otherwise. They were convinced, and not without reason, that the sacrifice of their little capital would merely put off the evil day, and that the persecution would very soon recommence. In this way they would have to suffer as before, and have the additional mortification of feeling that they had spent to no purpose the little that they possessed. Their fatalistic belief in the "perhaps" (*avos'*) came here to their aid. Perhaps the proprietor might become weary of his efforts when he saw that they led to no result, or perhaps something might occur which would remove the persecutor.

It always happened, however, that when a proprietor treated his serfs with extreme injustice and cruelty, some of them lost patience, and sought refuge in flight. As the estates lay perfectly open on all sides, and it was utterly impossible to exercise a strict supervision, nothing was easier than to run away, and the fugitive might be a hundred miles off before his absence was noticed. But the oppressed serf was reluctant to adopt such an extreme measure. He had almost always a wife and family, and he could not possibly take them with him; flight, therefore, was expatriation for life in its most terrible form. Besides this, the life of a fugitive was by no means enviable. He was liable at any moment to fall into the hands of

the police, and to be put in prison or sent back to his master. So little charm, indeed, did this life present that not unfrequently after a few months or a few years the fugitive returned of his own accord to his former domicile.

Regarding fugitives or passportless wanderers in general, I may here remark parenthetically that there were two kinds. In the first place, there was the young, able-bodied peasant, who fled from the oppression of his master or from the conscription. Such a fugitive almost always sought out for himself a new domicile—generally in the southern provinces, where there was a great scarcity of labourers, and where many proprietors habitually welcomed all peasants who presented themselves, without making any inquiries as to passports. In the second place, there were those who chose fugitivism as a permanent mode of life. These were, for the most part, men or women of a certain age—widowers or widows—who had no close family ties, and who were too infirm or too lazy to work. The majority of these assumed the character of pilgrims. As such they could always find enough to eat, and could generally even collect a few roubles with which to grease the palm of any zealous police-officer who should arrest them.

For a life of this kind Russia presented peculiar facilities. There was abundance of monasteries, where all comers could live for three days without questions being asked, and where those who were willing to do a little work for the patron saint might live for a much longer period. Then there were the towns, where the rich merchants considered almsgiving as very profitable for salvation. And, lastly, there were the villages, where a professing pilgrim was sure to be hospitably received and entertained so long as he refrained from stealing and other acts too grossly inconsistent with

his assumed character. For those who contented themselves with simple fare, and did not seek to avoid the usual privations of a wanderer's life, these ordinary means of subsistence were amply sufficient. Those who were more ambitious and more cunning often employed their talents with great success in the world of the Old Ritualists and Sectarians.

The last and most desperate means of defence which the serfs possessed were fire-raising and murder. With regard to the amount of fire-raising there are no trustworthy statistics. With regard to the number of agrarian murders I once obtained some interesting statistical data, but unfortunately lost them. I may say, however, that these cases were not very numerous. This is to be explained in part by the patient, long-suffering character of the peasantry, and in part by the fact that the great majority of the proprietors were by no means such inhuman taskmasters as is sometimes supposed. When a case did occur, the Administration always made a strict investigation—punishing the guilty with exemplary severity, and taking no account of the provocation to which they had been subjected. The peasantry, on the contrary—at least, when the act was not the result of mere personal vengeance—secretly sympathised with "the unfortunates," and long cherished their memory as that of men who had suffered for the *Mir*.

In speaking of the serfs I have hitherto confined my attention to the members of the *Mir*, or rural Commune—that is to say, the peasants in the narrower sense of the term; but besides these there were the *Dvoróvuye*, or domestic servants, and of these I must add a word or two.

The *Dvoróvuye* were domestic slaves rather than serfs in the proper sense of the term. Let us, how-

ever, avoid wounding unnecessarily Russian sensibilities by the use of the ill-sounding word. We may call the class in question "domestics"—remembering, of course, that they were not quite domestic servants in the ordinary sense. They received no wages, were not at liberty to change masters, possessed almost no legal rights, and might be punished, hired out, or sold by their owners without any infraction of the written law.

These "domestics" were very numerous—out of all proportion to the work to be performed—and could consequently lead a very lazy life;* but the peasant considered it a great misfortune to be transferred to their ranks, for he thereby lost his share of the Communal land and the little independence which he enjoyed. It very rarely happened, however, that the proprietor took an able-bodied peasant as domestic. The class generally kept up its numbers by the legitimate and illegitimate method of natural increase; and involuntary additions were occasionally made when orphans were left without near relatives, and no other family wished to adopt them. To this class belonged the lackeys, servant-girls, cooks, coachmen, stable-boys, gardeners, and a large number of nondescript old men and women who had no very clearly defined functions. If the proprietor had a private theatre or orchestra, it was from this class that the actors and musicians were drawn. Those of them who were married and had children occupied a position intermediate between the ordinary domestic servant and the peasant. On the one hand, they received from the master a monthly allowance of food and a yearly allowance of clothes, and they were obliged to live in the immediate vicinity of

* Those proprietors who kept orchestras, large packs of hounds, &c., had sometimes several hundred domestic serfs.

the mansion-house; but, on the other hand, they had each a separate house or apartment, with a little cabbage-garden, and commonly a small plot of flax. The unmarried ones lived in all respects like ordinary domestic servants.

The number of these domestic serfs being generally out of all proportion to the amount of work they had to perform, they were imbued with a hereditary spirit of indolence, and they performed lazily and carelessly what they had to do. On the other hand, they were often sincerely attached to the family they served, and occasionally proved by acts their fidelity and attachment. Here is an instance out of many for which I can vouch. An old nurse, whose mistress was dangerously ill, vowed that, in the event of the patient's recovery, she would make a pilgrimage, first to Kief, the Holy City on the Dnieper, and afterwards to Solovetsk, a much revered monastery on an island in the White Sea. The patient recovered, and the old woman, in fulfilment of her vow, walked more than two thousand miles!

This class of serfs might well be called domestic slaves, but I must warn the reader that he ought not to use the expression when speaking with Russians, because they are extremely sensitive on the point. Serfage, they say, was something quite different from slavery, and slavery never existed in Russia.

The first part of this assertion is perfectly true, and the second part perfectly false. In old times, as I have said above, slavery was a recognised institution in Russia as in other countries. One can hardly read a few pages of the old chronicles without stumbling on references to slaves; and I distinctly remember—though I cannot at this moment give chapter and verse—that one of the old Russian princes was so valiant and so successful in his wars

that during his reign a slave might be bought for a few coppers. As late as the beginning of last century the domestic serfs were sold very much as domestic slaves used to be sold in countries where slavery was recognised as a legal institution. Here is an example of the customary advertisement; I take it almost at random from the *Moscow Gazette* of 1801:

"To Be Sold: three coachmen, well trained and handsome; and two girls, the one eighteen and the other fifteen years of age, both of them good-looking, and well acquainted with various kinds of handiwork. In the same house there are for sale two hair-dressers; the one, twenty-one years of age, can read, write, play on a musical instrument, and act as huntsman; the other can dress ladies' and gentlemen's hair. In the same house are sold pianos and organs."

A little further on in the same number of the paper, a first-rate clerk, a carver, and a lackey are offered for sale, and the reason assigned is a superabundance of the articles in question (*za izlishestvom*). In some instances it seems as if the serfs and the cattle were intentionally put in the same category, as in the following announcement: "In this house one can buy a coachman and a Dutch cow about to calve." The style of these advertisements, and the frequent recurrence of the same addresses show that there was at this time in Moscow a regular class of slave-dealers. The humane Alexander I. prohibited advertisements of this kind, but he did not put down the custom which they represented, and his successor, Nicholas I., took no effective measures for its repression.

Of the whole number of serfs belonging to the proprietors, the domestics formed, according to the census of 1857, no less than $6\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. (6·79), and their numbers were evidently rapidly increasing, for

in the preceding census they represented only 4·79 per cent. of the whole. This fact seems all the more significant when we observe that during this period the number of peasant serfs had diminished.

I must now bring this long chapter to an end. My aim has been to represent serfage in its normal, ordinary forms rather than in its occasional monstrous manifestations. Of these latter I have a collection containing ample materials for a whole series of sensation novels, but I refrain from quoting them, because I do not believe that the criminal annals of a country give a fair representation of its real condition. On the other hand, I do not wish to whitewash serfage or attenuate its evil consequences. No large body of men could long wield such enormous uncontrolled power without abusing it,* and no great body of men could long live under such power without suffering morally and materially from its pernicious influence. If serfage did not create that moral apathy and intellectual lethargy which formed, as it were, the atmosphere of Russian provincial life, it did much at least to preserve it. In short, serfage was the chief barrier to all material and moral progress, and in a time of moral awakening such as that which I have described in the preceding chapter, the question of Emancipation naturally came at once to the front.

* The number of deposed proprietors—or rather the number of estates placed under curators in consequence of the abuse of authority on the part of their owners—amounted in 1859 to 215. So at least I found in an official MS. document shown to me by the late Nicholas Milútin.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SERFS.

The Question raised—Chief Committee—The Nobles of the Lithuanian Provinces—The Tsar's Broad Hint to the Noblesse—Enthusiasm in the Press—The Proprietors—Political Aspirations—No Opposition—The Government—Public Opinion—Fear of the Proletariat—The Provincial Committees—The Elaboration Commission—The Question ripens—Provincial Deputies—Discontent and Demonstrations—The Manifesto—Fundamental Principles of the Law—Illusions and Disappointment of the Serfs—Arbiters of the Peace—A Characteristic Incident—Redemption—Who effected the Emancipation?

It is a fundamental principle of Russian political organisation that all initiative in public affairs proceeds from the Autocratic Power. The widespread desire, therefore, for the Emancipation of the serfs did not find free expression so long as the Emperor kept silence regarding his intentions. The educated classes watched anxiously for some sign, and soon a sign was given to them. In March, 1856—a few days after the publication of the manifesto announcing the conclusion of peace with the Western Powers—his Majesty said to the Marshals of Noblesse in Moscow: "For the removal of certain unfounded reports I consider it necessary to declare to you that I have not at present the intention of annihilating serfage; but certainly, as you yourselves know, the existing manner of possessing serfs cannot remain unchanged. It is better to abolish serfage from above than to await the time when it will begin to abolish itself from below. I request you, gentlemen, to consider how this can be put into execution, and to submit my words to the Noblesse for their consideration."

These words were intended to sound the Noblesse, and induce them to make a voluntary proposal, but they had not the desired effect. Abolitionist enthusiasm was rare among the great nobles, and those who really wished to see serfage abolished considered the Imperial utterance too vague and oracular to justify them in taking the initiative. As no further steps were taken for some time the excitement caused by the incident soon subsided, and many people assumed that the consideration of the problem had been indefinitely postponed. "The Government," it was said, "evidently intended to raise the question, but on perceiving the indifference or hostility of the landed proprietors, it became frightened and drew back."

The Emperor was in reality disappointed. He had expected that his "faithful Moscow Noblesse," of which he was wont to say he was himself a member, would at once respond to his call, and that the ancient capital would have the honour of beginning the work. And if the example were thus given by Moscow he had no doubt that it would soon be followed by the other provinces. He now perceived that the fundamental principles on which the Emancipation should be effected must be laid down by the Government, and for this purpose he created a secret committee composed of several great officers of State.

This "Chief Committee for Peasant Affairs," as it was afterwards called, devoted six months to studying the history of the question. Emancipation schemes were by no means a new phenomenon in Russia. Ever since the time of Catherine II. the Government had thought of improving the condition of the serfs, and on more than one occasion a general Emancipation had been contemplated. In this way the question

had slowly ripened, and certain fundamental principles had come to be pretty generally recognised. Of these principles the most important was that the State should not consent to any project which would uproot the peasant from the soil and allow him to wander about at will; for such a measure would render the collection of the taxes impossible, and in all probability produce the most frightful agrarian disorders. And to this general principle there was an important corollary: if severe restrictions were to be placed on free migration, it would be necessary to provide the peasantry with land in the immediate vicinity of the villages; otherwise they must inevitably fall back under the power of the proprietors, and a new and worse kind of serfage would thus be created. But in order to give land to the peasantry it would be necessary to take it from the proprietors; and this expropriation seemed to many a most unjustifiable infringement of the sacred rights of property. It was this consideration that had restrained Nicholas from taking any decisive measures with regard to serfage; and it had now considerable weight with the members of the committee, who were nearly all great landowners.

Notwithstanding the strenuous exertions of the Grand Duke Constantine, who had been appointed a member for the express purpose of accelerating the proceedings, the committee did not show as much zeal and energy as was desired, and orders were given to take some decided step. At that moment a convenient opportunity presented itself.

In the Lithuanian Provinces, where the nobles were Polish by origin and sympathies, the miserable condition of the peasantry had induced the Government in the preceding reign to limit the arbitrary power of the serf-owners by so-called Inventories, in

which the mutual obligations of masters and serfs were regulated and defined. These Inventories had caused great dissatisfaction, and the proprietors now proposed that they should be revised. Of this the Government determined to take advantage. On the somewhat violent assumption that these proprietors wished to emancipate their serfs, an Imperial rescript was prepared approving of their supposed desire, and empowering them to form committees for the preparation of definite projects.* In the rescript itself the word emancipation was studiously avoided, but there could be no doubt as to the implied meaning, for it was expressly stated in the supplementary considerations that "the abolition of serfage must be effected not suddenly, but gradually." Four days later the Minister of the Interior, in accordance with a secret order from the Emperor, sent a circular to the Governors and Marshals of Noblesse all over Russia Proper, informing them that the nobles of the Lithuanian Provinces "had recognised the necessity of liberating the peasants," and that "this noble intention" had afforded peculiar satisfaction to his Majesty. A copy of the rescript and the fundamental principles to be observed accompanied the circular, "in case the nobles of other provinces should express a similar desire."

This circular produced an immense sensation throughout the country. No one could for a moment misunderstand the suggestion that the nobles of other provinces *might possibly* express a desire to liberate their serfs. Such vague words, when spoken by an autocrat, have a very definite and unmistakable

* This celebrated document is known as "The Rescript to Nazímof." More than once in the course of conversation I did all in my power, within the limits of politeness and discretion, to extract from General Nazímof a detailed account of this important episode, but my efforts were unsuccessful.

meaning, which prudent loyal subjects have no difficulty in understanding. If any doubted, their doubts were soon dispelled, for the Emperor, a few weeks later, publicly expressed a hope that, with the help of God and the co-operation of the nobles, the work would be successfully accomplished.

The die was cast, and the Government looked anxiously to see the result.

The periodical Press—which was at once the product and the fomenter of the liberal aspirations—hailed the raising of the question with boundless enthusiasm. The Emancipation, it was said, would certainly open a new and glorious epoch in the national history. Serfage was described as an ulcer that had long been poisoning the national blood; as an enormous weight under which the whole nation groaned; as an insurmountable obstacle, preventing all material and moral progress; as a cumbrous load, which rendered all free, vigorous action impossible, and prevented Russia from rising to the level of the Western nations. If Russia had succeeded in stemming the flood of adverse fortune in spite of this millstone round her neck, what might she not accomplish when free and untrammelled? All sections of the literary world had arguments to offer in support of the foregone conclusion. The moralists declared that all the prevailing vices were the product of serfage, and that moral progress was impossible in an atmosphere of slavery; the lawyers held that the arbitrary authority of the proprietors over the peasants had no legal basis; the economists explained that free labour was an indispensable condition of industrial and commercial prosperity; the philosophical historians showed that the normal historical development of the country demanded the immediate abolition of this superannuated remnant of barbarism; and the

writers of the sentimental, gushing type poured forth endless effusions about brotherly love to the weak and the oppressed. In a word, the Press was for the moment unanimous, and displayed a feverish excitement which demanded a liberal use of superlatives.

This enthusiastic tone accorded perfectly with the feelings of a large section of the nobles. Nearly the whole of the Noblesse was more or less affected by the new-born enthusiasm for everything just, humanitarian, and liberal. The aspirations found, of course, their most ardent representatives among the educated youth; but they were by no means confined to the younger men, who had passed through the universities and had always regarded serfage as a stain on the national honour. Many a Saul was found among the prophets. Many an old man, with grey hairs and grandchildren, who had all his life placidly enjoyed the fruits of serf labour, was now heard to speak of serfage as an antiquated institution which could not be reconciled with modern humanitarian ideas; and not a few of all ages, who had formerly never thought of reading books or newspapers, now perused assiduously the periodical literature, and picked up the liberal and humanitarian phrases with which it was filled.

This Abolitionist fervour was considerably augmented by certain political aspirations which did not appear in the newspapers, but which were at that time very generally entertained. In spite of the Press-censure a large section of the educated classes had become acquainted with the political literature of France and Germany, and had imbibed therefrom an unbounded admiration for Constitutional government. A Constitution, it was thought, would necessarily remove all political evils and create something like a

political Millennium. And it was not to be a Constitution of the ordinary sort—the fruit of compromise between hostile political parties—but an institution designed calmly according to the latest results of political science, and so constructed that all classes would voluntarily contribute to the general welfare. The necessary prelude to this happy era of political liberty was, of course, the abolition of serfage. When the nobles had given up their power over their serfs they would receive a Constitution as an indemnification and reward.

There were, however, many nobles of the old school who remained impervious to all these new feelings and ideas. On them the raising of the Emancipation question had a very different effect. They had no source of revenue but their estates, and they could not conceive the possibility of working their estates without serf labour. If the peasant was indolent and careless even under strict supervision, what would he become when no longer under the authority of a master? If the profits from farming were already small, what would they be when no one would work without wages? And this was not the worst, for it was quite evident from the circular that the land question was to be raised, and that a considerable portion of each estate would be transferred, at least for a time, to the emancipated peasants.

To the proprietors who looked at the question in this way the prospect of Emancipation was certainly not at all agreeable, but we must not imagine that they felt as English landowners would feel if threatened by a similar danger. In England a hereditary estate has for the family a value far beyond what it would bring in the market. It is regarded as one and indivisible, and any dismemberment of it would be looked upon as a grave family misfortune. In Russia, on the con-

trary, estates have nothing of this semi-sacred character, and may be at any time dismembered without outraging family feeling or traditional associations. Indeed, it is not uncommon that when a proprietor dies, leaving only one estate and several children, the property is broken up into fractions and divided among the heirs. Even the prospect of pecuniary sacrifice did not alarm the Russians so much as it would alarm Englishmen. Men who keep no accounts and take little thought for the morrow are much less averse to making pecuniary sacrifices—whether for a wise or a foolish purpose—than those who carefully arrange their mode of life according to their income.

Still, after due allowance has been made for these peculiarities, it must be admitted that the feeling of dissatisfaction and alarm was very wide-spread. Even Russians do not like the prospect of losing a part of their land and income. No protest, however, was entered, and no opposition was made. Those who were hostile to the measure were ashamed to show themselves selfish and unpatriotic. At the same time they knew very well that the Emperor, if he wished, could effect the Emancipation in spite of them, and that resistance on their part would draw down upon them the Imperial displeasure, without affording any compensating advantage. They knew, too, that there was a danger from below, so that any useless show of opposition would be like playing with matches in a powder-magazine. The serfs would soon hear that the Tsar desired to set them free, and they might, if they suspected that the proprietors were trying to frustrate the Tsar's benevolent intentions, use violent measures to get rid of the opposition. The idea of agrarian massacres had already taken possession of many timid minds. Besides this, all classes of the

proprietors felt that if the work was to be done, it should be done by the Noblesse and not by the bureaucracy. If it were effected by the nobles the interests of the land-owners would be duly considered, but if it were effected by the Administration without their concurrence and co-operation, their interests would be neglected, and there would inevitably be an enormous amount of jobbery and corruption. In accordance with this view the Noblesse corporations of the various provinces successively requested permission to form committees for the consideration of the question, and during the year 1858 a committee was opened in almost every province in which serfage existed.

In this way the question was apparently handed over for solution to the nobles, but in reality the Noblesse was called upon merely to advise, and not to legislate. The Government had not only laid down the fundamental principles of the scheme; it continually supervised the work of construction, and it reserved to itself the right of modifying or rejecting the projects proposed by the committees.

According to these fundamental principles the serfs should be emancipated gradually, so that for some time they would remain attached to the glebe and subject to the authority of the proprietors. During this transition period they should redeem by money payments or labour their houses and gardens, and enjoy in usufruct a certain quantity of land, sufficient to enable them to support themselves, and to fulfil their obligations to the State as well as to the proprietor. In return for this land they should pay a yearly rent in money, produce, or labour, over and above the yearly sum paid for the redemption of their houses and gardens. As to what should be done after the expiry of the transition period, the Government

seems to have had no clearly conceived intentions. Probably it hoped that by that time the proprietors and their emancipated serfs would have invented some convenient *modus vivendi*, and that nothing but a little legislative regulation would be necessary. But radical legislation is like the letting-out of water. These fundamental principles, adopted at first with a view to mere immediate practical necessity, soon acquired a very different significance. To understand this we must return to the periodical literature.

Until the serf question came to be discussed, the reform aspirations were very vague, and consequently there was a remarkable unanimity among their representatives. The great majority of the educated classes were unanimously of opinion that Russia should at once adopt from the West all those liberal principles and institutions, the exclusion of which had prevented the country from rising to the level of the Western nations. But very soon symptoms of a schism became apparent. Whilst the literature in general was still preaching the doctrine that Russia should adopt everything that was "liberal," a few voices began to be heard warning the unwary that much which bore the name of liberal was in reality already antiquated and worthless—that Russia ought not to follow blindly in the footsteps of other nations, but ought rather to profit by their experience, and avoid the errors into which they had fallen.

The chief of these errors was, according to these new teachers, the abnormal development of individualism—the adoption of that principle of *laissez faire* which forms the basis of what may be called the Orthodox School of Political Economists. Individualism and unrestricted competition, it was said, have now reached in the West an abnormal and monstrous development. Supported by the *laissez*

faire principle, they have led—and must always lead—to the oppression of the weak, the tyranny of capital, the impoverishment of the masses for the benefit of the few, and the formation of a hungry, dangerous Proletariat! This has already been recognised by the most advanced thinkers of France and Germany. If the older countries cannot at once cure those evils, that is no reason for Russia to inoculate herself with them. She is still at the commencement of her career, and it would be folly for her to wander voluntarily for ages in the Desert, when a direct route to the Promised Land has been already discovered.

In order to convey some idea of the influence which this teaching exercised, I must here recall, at the risk of repeating myself, what I said in a former chapter. The Russians, as I have there pointed out, have a peculiar way of treating political and social questions. Having received their political education from books, they naturally attribute to theoretical considerations an importance which seems to us exaggerated. When any important or trivial question arises, they at once launch into a sea of philosophical principles, and pay less attention to the little objects close at hand than to the big ones that appear on the distant horizon of the future. And when they set to work at any political reform they begin *ab ovo*. As they have no traditional prejudices to fetter them, and no traditional principles to lead them, they naturally take for their guidance the latest conclusions of political philosophy.

Bearing this in mind, let us see how it affected the Emancipation question. The Proletariat—described as a dangerous monster which was about to swallow up society in Western Europe, and which might at any moment cross the frontier unless kept

out by vigorous measures—took possession of the popular imagination, and aroused the fears of the reading public. To many it seemed that the best means of preventing the formation of a Proletariat in Russia was the securing of land for the emancipated serfs, and the careful preservation of the rural Commune. "Now is the moment," it was said, "for deciding the important question whether Russia is to fall a prey, like the Western nations, to this terrible evil, or whether she is to protect herself for ever against it. In the decision of this question lies the future destiny of the country. If the peasants be emancipated without land, or if those Communal institutions, which give to every man a share of the soil and secure this inestimable boon for the generations still unborn, be now abolished, a Proletariat will be rapidly formed, and the peasantry will become a disorganised mass of homeless wanderers like the English agricultural labourers. If, on the contrary, a fair share of land be granted to them, and if the Commune be made proprietor of the land ceded, the danger of a Proletariat is for ever removed, and Russia will thereby set an example to the civilised world! Never has a nation had such an opportunity of making an enormous leap forward on the road of progress, and never again will the opportunity occur. The Western nations have discovered their error when it is too late—when the peasantry have been already deprived of their land, and the labouring classes of the towns have already fallen a prey to the insatiable cupidity of the capitalists. In vain their most eminent thinkers warn and exhort. Ordinary remedies are no longer of any avail. But Russia may avoid these dangers, if she but act wisely and prudently in this great matter. The peasants are still in actual, if not legal, possession of the land,

and there is as yet no Proletariat in the towns. All that is necessary, therefore, is to abolish the arbitrary authority of the proprietors without expropriating the peasants, and without disturbing the existing Communal institutions, which form the best barrier against pauperism."

These ideas were warmly espoused by many proprietors, and exercised a very great influence on the deliberations of the Provincial Committees. In these committees there were generally two groups. The majorities, whilst making large concessions to the claims of justice and expediency, endeavoured to defend, as far as possible, the interests of their class; the minorities, though by no means indifferent to the interests of the class to which they belonged, allowed the more abstract theoretical considerations to be predominant. At first the majorities did all in their power to evade the fundamental principles laid down by the Government as much too favourable to the peasantry; but when they perceived that public opinion, as represented by the Press, went much further than the Government, they clung to these fundamental principles—which secured at least the fee simple of the estate to the landlord—as their anchor of safety. Between the two parties arose naturally a strong spirit of hostility, and the Government, which wished to have the support of the minorities, found it advisable that both should present their projects for consideration.

As the Provincial Committees worked independently, there was considerable diversity in the conclusions at which they arrived. The task of codifying these conclusions, and elaborating out of them a general scheme of Emancipation, was entrusted to a special Imperial Commission, composed partly of officials and partly of landed proprietors named by

the Emperor.* Those who believed that the question had really been handed over to the Noblesse assumed that this Commission would merely arrange the materials presented by the Provincial Committees, and that the Emancipation Law would thereafter be elaborated by a National Assembly of deputies elected by the nobles. In reality the Commission, working in St. Petersburg under the direct guidance and control of the Government, fulfilled a very different and much more important function. Using the combined projects merely as a storehouse from which it could draw the proposals it desired, it formed a new project of its own, which ultimately received, after undergoing modification in detail, the Imperial assent. Instead of being a mere *chancellerie*, as many expected, it became in a certain sense the author of the Emancipation Law.

There were, as we have seen, in nearly all the Provincial Committees a majority and a minority, the former of which strove to defend the interests of the proprietors, whilst the latter paid more attention to theoretical considerations, and endeavoured to secure for the peasantry a large amount of land and Communal self-government. In the Commission there were the same two parties, but their relative strength was very different. Here the men of theory, instead of forming a minority, were more numerous than their opponents, and enjoyed the support of the Government, which regulated the proceedings. In its instructions we see how much the question had ripened under the influence of the theoretical considerations. There is no longer any trace of the idea that the Emancipation should be gradual; on the contrary, it is expressly declared that the

* Known as the *Redaktsiónnaya Komissiya*, or Elaboration Commission. Strictly speaking there were two, but they are commonly spoken of as one.

immediate effect of the law should be the complete abolition of the proprietor's authority. There is even evidence of a clear intention of preventing the proprietor as far as possible from exercising any influence over his former serfs. The sharp distinction between the land occupied by the village and the arable land to be ceded in usufruct likewise disappears, and it is merely said that efforts should be made to enable the peasants to become proprietors of the land they required.

The aim of the Government had thus become clear and well defined. The task to be performed was to transform the serfs at once, and with the least possible disturbance of the existing economic conditions, into a class of small Communal proprietors—that is to say, a class of free peasants possessing a house and garden, and a share of the Communal land. To effect this it was merely necessary to declare the serf personally free, to draw a clear line of demarcation between the Communal land and the rest of the estate, and to determine the price or rent which should be paid for this Communal property, inclusive of the land on which the village was built.

The law was prepared in strict accordance with these principles. As to the amount of land to be ceded, it was decided that the existing arrangements, founded on experience, should, as a general rule, be preserved—in other words, the land actually enjoyed by the peasants should be retained by them; and in order to prevent extreme cases of injustice, a maximum and a minimum were fixed for each district. In like manner, as to the dues, it was decided that the existing arrangements should be taken as the basis of the calculation, but that the sum should be modified according to the amount of land ceded. At the same time facilities were to be given for the transforming

of the labour dues into yearly money payments, and for enabling the peasants to redeem them, with the assistance of the Government in the form of credit.

This idea of redemption created, at first, a feeling of alarm among the proprietors. It was bad enough to be obliged to cede a large part of the estates in usufruct, but it seemed to be much worse to have to sell it. Redemption appeared to be a species of wholesale confiscation. But very soon it became evident that the redeeming of the land was profitable for both parties. Cession in perpetual usufruct was felt to be in reality tantamount to alienation of the land, whilst the immediate redemption would enable the proprietors, who had generally little or no ready money, to pay their debts, to clear their estates from mortgages, and to make the outlays necessary for the transition to free labour. The majority of the proprietors, therefore, said openly: "Let the Government give us a suitable compensation in money for the land that is taken from us, so that we may be at once freed from all further trouble and annoyance."

When it became known that the Commission was not merely arranging and codifying the materials, but elaborating a law of its own and regularly submitting its decisions for Imperial confirmation, a feeling of dissatisfaction appeared all over the country. The nobles perceived that the question was being taken out of their hands, and was being solved by a small body composed of bureaucrats and nominees of the Government. After having made a voluntary sacrifice of their rights, they were being unceremoniously pushed aside! They had still, however, the means of correcting this. The Emperor had publicly promised that before the project should become law, deputies from the Provincial Committees should

be summoned to St. Petersburg to make objections and propose amendments.

The Commission and the Government would have willingly dispensed with all further advice from the nobles, but it was necessary to redeem the Imperial promise. Deputies were therefore summoned to the capital, but they were not allowed to form, as they hoped, a public assembly for the discussion of the question. All their efforts to hold meetings were frustrated, and they were required merely to answer in writing a list of printed questions regarding matters of detail. The fundamental principles, they were told, had already received the Imperial sanction, and were consequently removed from discussion. Those who desired to discuss details were invited individually to attend meetings of the Commission, where they found one or two members ready to engage with them in a little dialectical fencing. This, of course, did not give much satisfaction. Indeed, the ironical tone in which the fencing was too often conducted served to increase the existing irritation. It was only too evident that the Commission had triumphed, and some of the members could justly boast that they had drowned the deputies in ink, and buried them under reams of paper.

Believing, or at least professing to believe, that the Emperor was being deceived in this matter by the Administration, several groups of deputies presented petitions to his Majesty containing a respectful protest against the manner in which they had been treated. But by this act they simply laid themselves open to "the most unkindest cut of all." Those who had signed the petitions received a formal reprimand through the police!

This treatment of the deputies, and, above all, this gratuitous insult, produced among the nobles a storm of

indignation. They felt that they had been entrapped! The Government had artfully induced them to form projects for the emancipation of their serfs, and now, after having been used as a cat's-paw in the work of their own spoliation, they were being unceremoniously pushed aside as no longer necessary! Those who had indulged in the hope of gaining political rights felt the blow most keenly. A first gentle and respectful attempt at remonstrance had been answered by a dictatorial reprimand through the police! Instead of being called to take an active part in home and foreign politics, they were being treated as naughty school-boys. In view of this insult all differences of opinion were for the moment forgotten, and all parties resolved to join in a vigorous protest against the insolence and arbitrary conduct of the bureaucracy.

A convenient opportunity of making this protest in a legal way was offered by the triennial Provincial Assemblies of the Noblesse about to be held in several provinces. So at least it was thought, but here again the Noblesse was checkmated by the Administration. Before the opening of the Assemblies a circular was issued excluding the Emancipation question from their deliberations. Some Assemblies evaded this order, and succeeded in making a little demonstration by submitting to his Majesty that the time had arrived for other reforms, such as the separation of the administrative and judicial powers, and the creation of local self-government, public judicial procedure, and trial by jury.

All these reforms were voluntarily effected by the Emperor a few years later, but the manner in which they were suggested seemed to savour of insubordination, and was a flagrant infraction of the principle that all initiative in public affairs should proceed from the central Government. New measures of repression

were accordingly used. Some Marshals of Noblesse were reprimanded and others deposed. Of the conspicuous leaders, two were exiled to distant provinces and others placed under the supervision of the police. Worst of all, the whole agitation strengthened the Commission by convincing the Emperor that the majority of the nobles were hostile to his benevolent plans.*

When the Commission had finished its labours, its proposals passed to the two higher instances — the Committee for Peasant Affairs and the Council of State—and in both of these the Emperor declared plainly that he could allow no fundamental changes. From all the members he demanded a complete forgetfulness of former differences and a conscientious execution of his orders; "for you must remember," he significantly added, "that in Russia laws are made by the Autocratic Power." From an historical review of the question he drew the conclusion that "the Autocratic Power created serfage, and the Autocratic Power ought to abolish it." On March 3rd (February 19th, old style), 1861, the law was signed, and by that act more than twenty millions of serfs were liberated.† A Manifesto containing the fundamental principles of the law was at once sent all over the country, and an order was given that it should be read in all the churches.

* This was a misinterpretation of the facts. Very many of those who joined in the protest sincerely sympathised with the idea of Emancipation, and were ready to be even more "liberal" than the Government.

† It is sometimes said that forty millions of serfs have been emancipated The statement is true, if we regard the State Peasants as serfs. They held, as I have already explained, an intermediate position between serfage and freedom. The peculiar administration under which they lived was partly abolished by Imperial Orders of September 7th, 1859, and October 23rd, 1861. In 1866 they were placed, as regards administration, on a level with the emancipated serfs of the proprietors. As a general rule, they received rather more land and had to pay somewhat lighter dues than the emancipated serfs in the narrower sense of the term.

The three fundamental principles laid down by the law were :—

1. That the serfs should at once receive the civil rights of the free rural classes, and that the authority of the proprietor should be replaced by Communal self-government.

2. That the rural Communes should as far as possible retain the land they actually held, and should in return pay to the proprietor certain yearly dues in money or labour.

3. That the Government should by means of credit assist the Communes to redeem these dues, or, in other words, to purchase the lands ceded to them in usufruct.

With regard to the domestic serfs, it was enacted that they should continue to serve their masters during two years, and that thereafter they should be completely free, but they should have no claim to a share of the land.

It might be reasonably supposed that the serfs received with boundless gratitude and delight the Manifesto proclaiming these principles. Here at last was the realisation of their long-cherished hopes. Liberty was accorded to them; and not only liberty, but a goodly portion of the soil—about half of all the arable land possessed by the proprietors.

In reality the Manifesto created among the peasantry a feeling of disappointment rather than delight. To understand this strange fact we must endeavour to place ourselves at the peasant's point of view.

In the first place it must be remarked that all vague, rhetorical phrases about free labour, human dignity, national progress, and the like, which may readily produce among educated men a certain amount of temporary enthusiasm, fall on the ears of the Russian peasant like drops of rain on a granite rock.

The fashionable rhetoric of philosophical liberalism is as incomprehensible to him as the flowery circumlocutionary style of an Oriental scribe would be to a keen City merchant. The idea of liberty in the abstract and the mention of rights which lie beyond the sphere of his ordinary everyday life awaken no enthusiasm in his breast. And for mere names he has a profound indifference. What matters it to him that he is officially called, not a "serf," but a "free village-inhabitant," if the change in official terminology is not accompanied by some immediate material advantage? What he wants is a house to live in, food to eat, and raiment wherewithal to be clothed, and to gain these first necessaries of life with as little labour as possible.

He looked at the question exclusively from two points of view—that of historical right and that of material advantage—and from both of these the Emancipation Law seemed to him very unsatisfactory.

On the subject of historical right the peasantry had their own traditional conceptions, which were completely at variance with the written law. According to the positive legislation the Communal land formed part of the estate, and consequently belonged to the proprietor; but according to the conceptions of the peasantry it belonged to the Commune, and the right of the proprietor consisted merely in that personal authority over the serfs which had been conferred on him by the Tsar. The peasants could not, of course, put these conceptions into a strict legal form, but they often expressed them in their own homely laconic way by saying to their master, "Mui vashi no zemlyâ nasha"—that is to say, "We are yours, but the land is ours." And it must be admitted that this view, though legally untenable, had a certain historical justification.* In old times the nobles had held their

* See preceding chapter.

land by feudal tenure, and were liable to be ejected as soon as they did not fulfil their obligations to the State. These obligations had been long since abolished, and the feudal tenure transformed into an unconditional right of property, but the peasants clung to the old ideas in a way that strikingly illustrates the vitality of deep-rooted popular conceptions. In their minds the proprietors were merely temporary occupants, who were allowed by the Tsar to exact labour and dues from the serfs. What, then, was Emancipation? Certainly the abolition of all obligatory labour and money dues, and perhaps the complete ejectment of the proprietors. On this latter point there was a difference of opinion. All assumed, as a matter of course, that the Communal land would remain the property of the Commune, but it was not so clear what would be done with the rest of the estate. Some thought that it would be retained by the proprietor, but very many believed that *all* the land would be given to the Communes. In this way the Emancipation would be in accordance with historical right and with the material advantage of the peasantry, for whose exclusive benefit, it was assumed, the reform had been undertaken.

Instead of this the peasants found that they were still to pay dues, even for the Communal land which they regarded as unquestionably their own! So at least said the expounders of the law. But the thing was incredible. Either the proprietors must be concealing or misinterpreting the law, or this was merely a preparatory measure, which would be followed by the real Emancipation. Thus were awakened among the peasantry a spirit of mistrust and suspicion and a widespread belief that there would be a second Imperial Manifesto, by which all the land would be divided and all the dues abolished.

On the nobles the Manifesto made a very different impression. The fact that they were to be entrusted with the putting of the law into execution, and the flattering allusions made to the spirit of generous self-sacrifice which they had exhibited, kindled amongst them enthusiasm enough to make them forget for a time their just grievances and their hostility towards the bureaucracy. They found that the conditions on which the Emancipation was effected were by no means so ruinous as they had anticipated; and the Emperor's appeal to their generosity and patriotism made many of them throw themselves with ardour into the important task confided to them.

Unfortunately they could not at once begin the work. The law had been so hurried through the last stages that the preparations for putting it into execution were by no means complete when the Manifesto was published. The task of regulating the future relations between the proprietors and the peasantry was entrusted to local proprietors in each district, who were to be called Arbiters of the Peace (*Mirovuiye Posrédniki*); but three months elapsed before these Arbiters could be appointed. During that time there was no one to explain the law to the peasants and settle the disputes between them and the proprietors; and the consequence of this was that many cases of insubordination and disorder occurred. The muzhik naturally imagined that, as soon as the Tsar said he was free, he was no longer obliged to work for his old master—that all obligatory labour ceased as soon as the Manifesto was read. In vain the proprietor endeavoured to convince him that, in regard to labour, the old relations must continue, as the law enjoined, until a new arrangement had been made. To all explanations and exhortations he turned a deaf ear, and to the efforts of the rural police he too often opposed

a dogged, passive resistance. In many cases the simple appearance of the higher authorities sufficed to restore order, for the presence of one of the Tsar's servants convinced many that the order to work for the present as formerly was not a mere invention of the proprietors. But not unfrequently the birch had to be applied. Indeed, I am inclined to believe, from the numerous descriptions of this time which I received from eye-witnesses, that rarely, if ever, had the serfs seen and experienced so much flogging as during these first three months after their liberation. Sometimes even the troops had to be called out, and on three occasions they fired on the peasants with ball cartridge. In the most serious case, where a young peasant had set up for a prophet and declared that the Emancipation Law was a forgery, fifty-one peasants were killed and seventy-seven were more or less seriously wounded.

In spite of these lamentable incidents, there was nothing which even the most violent alarmist could dignify with the name of an insurrection. Nowhere was there anything that could be called organised resistance. Even in the case above alluded to, the three thousand peasants on whom the troops fired were entirely unarmed, made no attempt to resist, and dispersed in the utmost haste as soon as they discovered that they were being shot down. Had the military authorities shown a little more judgment, tact and patience, the history of the Emancipation would not have been stained even with those three solitary cases of unnecessary bloodshed.

This interregnum between the eras of serfage and liberty was brought to an end by the appointment of the Arbiters of the Peace. Their first duty was to explain the law, and to organise the new peasant self-government. The lowest instance or primary organ

of this self-government, the rural Commune, already existed, and at once recovered much of its ancient vitality as soon as the authority and interference of the proprietors were removed. The second instance, the *Vólost*—a territorial administrative unit comprising several contiguous Communes — had to be created, for nothing of the kind had previously existed on the estates of the nobles. It had existed, however, for nearly a quarter of a century among the peasants of the Domains, and it was therefore necessary merely to copy an existing model.

As soon as all the Vólosts in his district had been thus organised, the Arbiter had to undertake the much more arduous task of regulating the agrarian relations between the proprietors and the Communes—with the individual peasants, be it remembered, the proprietors had no direct relations whatever. It had been enacted by the law that the future agrarian relations between the two parties should be left, as far as possible, to voluntary contract; and accordingly each proprietor was invited to come to an agreement with the Commune or Communes on his estate. On the ground of this agreement a statute-charter (*ustávnaya grámota*) was prepared, specifying the number of male serfs, the quantity of land actually enjoyed by them, any proposed changes in this amount, the dues proposed to be levied, and other details. If the Arbiter found that the conditions were in accordance with the law and clearly understood by the peasants, he confirmed the charter, and the arrangement was complete. When the two parties could not come to an agreement within a year, he prepared a charter according to his own judgment, and presented it for confirmation to the higher authorities.

The dissolution of partnership, if it be allowable to use such a term, between the proprietor and his serfs

was sometimes very easy and sometimes very difficult. On many estates the charter did little more than legalise the existing arrangements, but in many instances it was necessary to add to, or subtract from, the amount of Communal land, and sometimes it was even necessary to remove the village to another part of the estate. In all cases there were, of course, conflicting interests and complicated questions, so that the Arbiter had always abundance of difficult work. Besides this, he had to act as mediator in those differences which naturally arose during the transition period, when the authority of the proprietor had been abolished but the separation of the two classes had not yet been effected. The unlimited patriarchal authority which had been formerly wielded by the proprietor or his steward now passed with certain restrictions into the hands of the Arbiters, and these peacemakers had to spend a great part of their time in driving about from one estate to another to put an end to alleged cases of insubordination—some of which, it must be admitted, existed only in the imagination of the proprietors.

At first the work of amicable settlement proceeded slowly. The proprietors generally showed a conciliatory spirit, and some of them generously proposed conditions much more favourable to the peasants than the law demanded; but the peasants were filled with vague suspicions, and feared to commit themselves by "putting pen to paper." Even the highly respected proprietors, who imagined that they possessed the unbounded confidence of the peasantry, were suspected like the others, and their generous offers were regarded as well-baited traps. Often I have heard old men, sometimes with tears in their eyes, describe the distrust and ingratitude of the muzhik at this time. Many peasants still believed that the proprietors were hiding the real Emancipation Law, and imaginative

or ill-intentioned persons fostered this belief by professing to know what the real law contained. The most absurd rumours were afloat, and whole villages sometimes acted upon them. In the province of Moscow, for instance, one Commune sent a deputation to the proprietor to inform him that, as he had always been a good master, the *Mir* would allow him to retain his house and garden during his lifetime. In another locality it was rumoured that the Tsar sat daily on a golden throne in the Crimea, receiving all peasants who came to him, and giving them as much land as they desired; and in order to take advantage of the Imperial liberality a large body of peasants set out for the place indicated, and had to be stopped by the military!

As an illustration of the illusions in which the peasantry indulged at this time, I may mention here one of the many characteristic incidents related to me by gentlemen who had served as Arbiters of the Peace.

In the province of Riazán there was one Commune which had acquired a certain local notoriety for the obstinacy with which it refused all arrangements with the proprietor. My informant, who was Arbiter for the locality, was at last obliged to make a statute-charter for it without its consent. He wished, however, that the peasants should voluntarily accept the arrangement he proposed, and accordingly called them together to talk with them on the subject. After explaining fully the part of the law which related to their case, he asked them what objection they had to make a fair contract with their old master. For some time he received no answer, but gradually by questioning individuals he discovered the cause of their obstinacy: they were firmly convinced that not only the Communal land, but also the rest of the estate,

belonged to them. To eradicate this false idea he set himself to reason with them, and the following characteristic dialogue ensued:—

Arbiter: "If the Tsar gave all the land to the peasantry, what compensation could he give to the proprietors to whom the land belongs?"

Peasant: "The Tsar will give them salaries according to their service."

Arbiter: "In order to pay these salaries he would require a great deal more money. Where could he get that money? He would have to increase the taxes, and in that way you would have to pay all the same."

Peasant: "The Tsar can make as much money as he likes."

Arbiter: "If the Tsar can make as much money as he likes, why does he make you pay the poll-tax every year?"

Peasant: "It is not the Tsar that receives the taxes we pay."

Arbiter: "Who, then, receives them?"

Peasant (after a little hesitation, and with a knowing smile): "The officials, of course!"

Gradually, through the efforts of the Arbiters, the peasants came to know better their real position, and the work began to advance more rapidly. But soon it was checked by another influence. By the end of the first year the "liberal," patriotic enthusiasm of the nobles had cooled. The sentimental, idyllic tendencies had melted away at the first touch of reality, and those who had imagined that liberty would have an immediately salutary effect on the moral character of the serfs confessed themselves disappointed. Many complained that the peasants showed themselves greedy and obstinate, stole wood from the forest, allowed their cattle to wander on the proprietor's

fields, failed to fulfil their legal obligations, and broke their voluntary engagements. At the same time the fears of an agrarian rising subsided, so that even the timid were tranquillised. From these causes the conciliatory spirit of the proprietors decreased.

The work of conciliating and regulating became consequently more difficult, but the great majority of the Arbiters showed themselves equal to the task, and displayed an impartiality, tact, and patience beyond all praise. To them Russia is in great part indebted for the peaceful character of the Emancipation. Had they sacrificed the general good to the interests of their class, or had they habitually acted in that stern, administrative, military spirit which caused the instances of bloodshed above referred to, the prophecies of the alarmists would, in all probability, have been realised, and the historian of the Emancipation would have had a terrible list of judicial massacres to record. Fortunately they played the part of mediators, as their name signified, rather than that of administrators in the bureaucratic sense of the term, and they were animated with a just and humane rather than a merely legal spirit. Instead of simply laying down the law, and ordering their decisions to be immediately executed, they were ever ready to spend hours in trying to conquer, by patient and laborious reasoning, the unjust claims of proprietors or the false conceptions and ignorant obstinacy of the peasants. It was a new spectacle for Russia to see a public function fulfilled by conscientious men who had their heart in their work, who sought neither promotion nor decorations, and who paid less attention to the punctilious observance of prescribed formalities than to the real objects in view.

There were, it is true, a few men to whom this description does not apply. Some of these were

unduly under the influence of the feelings and conceptions created by serfage. Some, on the contrary, erred on the other side. Desirous of securing the future welfare of the peasantry and of gaining for themselves a certain kind of popularity, and at the same time animated with a violent spirit of pseudo-liberalism, these latter occasionally forgot that their duty was to be, not generous, but just, and that they had no right to practise generosity at other people's expense. All this I am quite aware of—I could even name one or two Arbiters who were guilty of positive dishonesty—but I hold that these were rare exceptions. The great majority did their duty faithfully and well.

The work of concluding contracts for the redemption of the dues, or, in other words, for the purchase of the land ceded in perpetual usufruct, proceeded slowly. The arrangement was as follows:—The dues were capitalised at six per cent., and the Government paid at once to the proprietors four-fifths of the whole sum. The peasants were to pay to the proprietor the remaining fifth, either at once or in instalments, and to the Government six per cent. for forty-nine years on the sum advanced. The proprietors willingly adopted this arrangement, for it provided them with a sum of ready money, and freed them from the difficult task of collecting the dues. But the peasants did not show much desire to undertake the operation. Some of them still expected a second emancipation, and those who did not take this possibility into their calculations were little disposed to make present sacrifices for distant prospective advantages which would not be realised for half a century.

In most cases the proprietor was obliged to remit, in whole or in part, the fifth to be paid by the peasants. Many Communes refused to undertake the operation on any conditions, and in consequence of this not a

few proprietors demanded the so-called obligatory redemption, according to which they accepted the four-fifths from the Government as full payment, and the operation was thus effected without the peasants being consulted. The total number of *male* serfs emancipated was about nine millions and three-quarters,* and of these, only about seven millions and a quarter had, at the beginning of 1875, made redemption contracts. Of the contracts signed at that time, about sixty-three per cent. were "obligatory." In 1887 the redemption was made obligatory for both parties, so that all Communes are now proprietors of the land previously held in perpetual usufruct; and in 1932 the debt will have been extinguished by the sinking fund, and all redemption payments will have ceased.

The serfs were thus not only liberated, but also made possessors of land and put on the road to becoming Communal proprietors, and the old Communal institutions were preserved and developed. In answer to the question, Who effected this gigantic reform? we may say that the chief merit undoubtedly belongs to Alexander II. Had he not possessed a very great amount of courage he would neither have raised the question nor allowed it to be raised by others, and had he not shown a great deal more decision and energy than was expected, the solution would have been indefinitely postponed. Among the members of his own family he found an able and energetic assistant in his brother, the Grand Duke Constantine, and a warm sympathiser with the cause in the Grand Duchess Helena, a German Princess, thoroughly devoted to the welfare of her adopted country. But we must not overlook the important part played by the nobles. Their conduct was very characteristic.

* This does not include the domestic serfs, who did not receive land.

As soon as the question was raised, a large number of them adopted the liberal ideas with enthusiasm; and as soon as it became evident that emancipation was inevitable, all made a holocaust of their ancient rights, and demanded to be liberated at once from all relations with their serfs. Moreover, when the law was passed, it was the proprietors who faithfully put it into execution. Lastly, we should remember that praise is due to the peasantry for their patience under disappointment, and for their orderly conduct as soon as they understood the law and recognised it to be the will of the Tsar. Thus it may justly be said that the Emancipation was not the work of one man, or one party, or one class, but of the nation as a whole.*

* The names most commonly associated with the Emancipation are General Rostóftsef, Lanskói (Minister of the Interior), Nicholas Milútin, Prince Tcherkassky, G. Samárin, Kosheléf. Many others, such as I. A. Soloviéf, Zhukófski, Domontovitch, Giers—brother of M. Giers, afterwards Minister for Foreign Affairs—are less known, but did valuable work. To all of these, with the exception of the first two, who died before my arrival in Russia, I have to confess my obligations. The late Nicholas Milútin rendered me special service by putting at my disposal not only all the official papers in his possession, but also many documents of a more private kind. By his early and lamented death Russia lost one of the greatest statesmen she has yet produced.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LANDED PROPRIETORS SINCE THE EMANCIPATION.

Two Opposite Opinions—Difficulties of Investigation—The Problem Simplified—Direct and Indirect Compensation—The Direct Compensation Inadequate—What the Proprietors have done with the Remainder of their Estates—Immediate Moral Effect of the Abolition of Serfage—The Economic Problem—The Ideal Solution and the Difficulty of Realising it—More Primitive Arrangements—The Northern Agricultural Zone—The Black-earth Zone—The Labour Difficulty—The Impoverishment of the Noblesse not a New Phenomenon—Mortgaging of Estates—Gradual Expropriation of the Noblesse—Rapid Increase in the Production and Export of Grain—How far this has benefited the Landed Proprietors.

WHEN the Emancipation question was raised there was a considerable diversity of opinion as to the effect which the abolition of serfage would have on the material interests of the two classes directly concerned. The Press and "the young generation" took an optimistic view, and endeavoured to prove that the proposed change would be beneficial alike to proprietors and to peasants. Science, it was said, has long since decided that free labour is immensely more productive than slavery or serfage, and the principle has been already proved to demonstration in the countries of Western Europe. In all those countries modern agricultural progress began with the emancipation of the serfs, and increased productivity was everywhere the immediate result of improvements in the method of culture. Thus the poor, light soils of Germany, France, and Holland have been made to produce more than the vaunted "black earth" of Russia. And from these ameliorations the landowning class has everywhere derived the chief advantages. Are not the landed proprietors of England—the

country in which serfage was first abolished—the richest in the world? And is not the proprietor of a few hundred *morgen* in Germany often richer than the Russian noble who has thousands of *dessyatins?*

By these and similar plausible arguments the Press endeavoured to prove to the proprietors that they ought, even in their own interest, to undertake the emancipation of the serfs. Many proprietors, however, showed little faith in the abstract principles of political economy and the vague teachings of history as interpreted by the contemporary periodical literature. They could not always refute the ingenious arguments adduced by the men of more sanguine temperament, but they felt convinced that their prospects were not nearly so bright as these men represented them to be. They believed that Russia was a peculiar country, and the Russians a peculiar people. The lower classes in England, France, Holland, and Germany were well known to be laborious and enterprising, while the Russian peasant was notoriously lazy, and would certainly, if left to himself, not do more work than was absolutely necessary to keep him from starving. Free labour might be more profitable than serfage in countries where the upper classes possessed traditional practical knowledge and abundance of capital, but in Russia the proprietors had neither the practical knowledge nor the ready money necessary to make the proposed ameliorations in the system of agriculture. To all this it was added that a system of emancipation by which the peasants should receive land and be made completely independent of the landed proprietors had nowhere been tried on such a large scale.

There were thus two diametrically opposite opinions regarding the economic results of the abolition of

serfage, and we have now to examine which of these two opinions has been confirmed by experience.

Let us look at the question first from the point of view of the landowners.

The reader who has never attempted to make investigations of this kind may naturally imagine that the question can be easily decided by simply consulting a large number of individual proprietors, and drawing a general conclusion from their evidence. In reality I found the task much more difficult. After roaming about the country for five years (1870-75), collecting information from the best available sources, I hesitated to draw any sweeping conclusions, and my state of mind at that time was naturally reflected in the early editions of this work. As a rule the proprietors could not state clearly how much they had lost or gained, and when definite information was obtained from them, it was not always trustworthy. In the time of serfage very few of them had been in the habit of keeping accurate accounts, or accounts of any kind, and when they lived on their estates there were a very large number of items which could not possibly be reduced to figures. Of course, each proprietor had a general idea as to whether his position was better or worse than it had been in the old times, but the vague statements made by individuals regarding their former and their actual revenues had little or no scientific value. So many considerations which had nothing to do with purely agrarian relations entered into the calculations that the conclusions did not help me much to estimate the economic results of the Emancipation as a whole.

Nor, it must be confessed, was the testimony by any means always unbiassed. Not a few spoke of the great reform in an epic or dithyrambic tone, and among these I easily distinguished two categories:

the one desired to prove that the measure was a complete success in every way, and that all classes were benefited by it, not only morally, but also materially; whilst the others strove to represent the proprietors in general, and themselves in particular, as the self-sacrificing victims of a great and necessary patriotic reform—as martyrs in the cause of liberty and progress. I do not for a moment suppose that these two groups of witnesses had a clearly conceived intention of deceiving or misleading, but as a cautious investigator I had to make allowance for their idealising and sentimental tendencies.

Since that time the situation has become much clearer, and during recent visits to Russia I have been able to arrive at much more definite conclusions. These I now proceed to communicate to the reader.

The Emancipation caused the proprietors of all classes to pass through a severe economic crisis. Periods of transition always involve much suffering, and the amount of suffering is generally in the inverse ratio of the precautions taken beforehand. In Russia the precautions had been neglected. Not one proprietor in a hundred had made any serious preparations for the inevitable change. On the eve of the Emancipation there were about ten millions of male serfs on private properties, and of these nearly seven millions remained under the old system of paying their dues in labour. Of course, everybody knew that Emancipation must come sooner or later, but forethought, prudence, and readiness to take time by the forelock are not among the prominent traits of the Russian character. Hence most of the landowners were taken unawares. But while all suffered, there were differences of degree. Some were completely shipwrecked. So long as serfage existed all the relations of life were ill-defined and extremely elastic,

so that a man who was hopelessly insolvent might contrive, with very little effort, to keep his head above water for half a lifetime. For such men the Emancipation, like a crisis in the commercial world, brought a day of reckoning. It did not really ruin them, but it showed them and the world at large that they were ruined, and they could no longer continue their old mode of life. For others the crisis was merely temporary. These emerged with a larger income than they ever had before, but I am not prepared to say that their material condition has improved, because the social habits have changed, the cost of living has become much greater, and the work of administering estates is incomparably more complicated and laborious than in the old patriarchal times.

We may greatly simplify the problem by reducing it to two definite questions:—

1. How far were the proprietors *directly* indemnified for the loss of serf labour and for the transfer in perpetual usufruct of a large part of their estates to the peasantry?

2. What have the proprietors done with the remainder of their estates, and how far have they been *indirectly* indemnified by the economic changes which have taken place since the Emancipation?

With the first of these questions I shall deal very briefly, because it is a controversial subject involving very complicated calculations which only a specialist can understand. The conclusion at which I have arrived, after much patient research, is that in most provinces the compensation was inadequate, and this conclusion is confirmed by excellent native authorities. M. Bekhteyev, for example, one of the most laborious and conscientious investigators in this field of research, and the author of an admirable work on

the economic results of the Emancipation,* told me recently, in course of conversation, that in his opinion the peasant dues fixed by the Emancipation Law represented, throughout the Black-Earth Zone, only about a half of the value of the labour previously supplied by the serfs. To this I must add that the compensation was in reality not nearly so great as it seemed to be according to the terms of the law. As the proprietors found it extremely difficult to collect the dues from the emancipated serfs, and as they required a certain amount of capital to reorganise the estate on the new basis of free labour, most of them were practically compelled to demand the obligatory redemption of the land (*obiazátelny vuíkup*), and in adopting this expedient they had to make considerable sacrifices. Not only had they to accept as full payment four-fifths of the normal sum, but of this amount the greater portion was paid in Treasury bonds, which fell at once to 80 per cent. of their nominal value.

Let us now pass to the second part of the problem: What have the proprietors done with the part of their estates which remained to them after ceding the required amount of land to the Communes? Have they been indirectly indemnified for the loss of serf labour by subsequent economic changes? How far have they succeeded in making the transition from serfage to free labour, and what revenues do they now derive from their estates? The answer to these questions will necessarily contain some account of the present economic position of the proprietors.

On all proprietors the Emancipation had at least one good effect: it dragged them forcibly from the old path of indolence and routine, and compelled them to think and calculate regarding their affairs. The

* "Khozaistvenniye Itogi istekshago Sorokolêtiya." St. Petersburg, 1902.

hereditary listlessness and apathy, the traditional habit of looking on the estate with its serfs as a kind of self-acting machine which must always spontaneously supply the owner with the means of living, the inveterate practice of spending all ready money, and of taking little heed for the morrow—all this, with much that resulted from it, was rudely swept away and became a thing of the past. The broad, easy road on which the proprietors had hitherto let themselves be borne along by the force of circumstances suddenly split up into a number of narrow, arduous, thorny paths. Each one had to use his judgment to determine which of the paths he should adopt, and, having made his choice, he had to struggle along as he best could. I remember once asking a proprietor what effect the Emancipation had had on the class to which he belonged, and he gave me an answer which is worth recording. "Formerly," he said, "we kept no accounts and drank champagne; now we keep accounts and content ourselves with *kvass*." Like all epigrammatic sayings, this laconic reply is far from giving a complete description of reality, but it indicates in a graphic way a change that has unquestionably taken place. As soon as serfage was abolished it was no longer possible to live like "the flowers of the field." Many a proprietor who had formerly vegetated in apathetic ease had to ask himself the question: How am I now to gain a living? All had to consider what was the most profitable way of employing the land that remained to them.

The ideal solution of the problem was that as soon as the peasant-land had been demarcated, the proprietor should take to farming the remainder of his estate by means of hired labour and agricultural machines in West-European or American fashion. Unfortunately, this solution could not be generally adopted, because

the great majority of the landlords, even when they had the requisite practical knowledge of agriculture, had not the requisite capital, and could not easily obtain it. Where were they to find money for buying cattle, horses, and agricultural implements, for building stables and cattle-sheds, and for defraying all the other initial expenses? And supposing they succeeded in starting the new system, where was the working capital to come from? The old Government institution in which estates could be mortgaged according to the number of serfs was permanently closed, and the new land-credit associations had not yet come into existence. To borrow from private capitalists was not to be thought of, for money was so scarce that ten per cent. was considered a "friendly" rate of interest. Recourse might be had, it is true, to the redemption operation, but in that case the Goverment would deduct the unpaid portion of any outstanding mortgage, and would pay the balance in depreciated Treasury bonds. In these circumstances the proprietors could not, as a rule, adopt what I have called the ideal solution, and had to content themselves with some simpler and more primitive arrangement. They could employ the peasants of the neighbouring villages to prepare the land and reap the crops either for a fixed sum per acre or on the *métayage* system, or they could let their land to the peasants for one, three, or six years at a moderate rent.

In the northern agricultural zone, where the soil is poor and primitive farming with free labour can hardly be made to pay, the proprietors had to let their land at a small rent, and those of them who could not find places in the rural administration migrated to the towns and sought employment in the public service or in the numerous commercial and industrial enterprises which were springing up at that time. There they

have since remained. Their country-houses, if inhabited at all, are occupied only for a few months in summer, and too often present a melancholy spectacle of neglect and dilapidation. In the Black-Earth Zone, on the contrary, where the soil still possesses enough of its natural fertility to make farming on a large scale profitable, the estates are in a very different condition. The owners cultivate at least a part of their property, and can easily let to the peasants at a fair rent the land which they do not wish to farm themselves. Some have adopted the *métayage* system; others get the field-work done by the peasants at so much per acre. The more energetic, who have capital enough at their disposal, organise farms with hired labourers on the European model. If they are not so well off as formerly, it is because they have adopted a less patriarchal and more expensive style of living. Their land has doubled and trebled in value during the last thirty years, and their revenues have increased, if not in proportion, at least considerably. In 1903 I visited a number of estates in this region and found them in a very prosperous condition, with agricultural machines of the English or American types, an increasing variety in the rotation of crops, greatly improved breeds of cattle and horses, and all the other symptoms of a gradual transition to a more intensive and more rational system of agriculture.

It must be admitted, however, that even in the Black-Earth Zone the proprietors have formidable difficulties to contend with, the chief of which are the scarcity of good farm-labourers, the frequent droughts, the low price of cereals, and the delay in getting the grain conveyed to the seaports. On each of these difficulties and the remedies that might be applied I could write a separate chapter, but I fear to overtax the reader's patience, and shall therefore confine my-

self to a few remarks about the labour question. On this subject the complaints are loud and frequent all over the country. The peasants, it is said, have become lazy, careless, addicted to drunkenness, and shamelessly dishonest with regard to their obligations, so that it is difficult to farm even in the old primitive fashion, and impossible to introduce radical improvements in the methods of culture. In these sweeping accusations there is a certain amount of truth. That the muzhik, when working for others, exerts himself as little as possible; that he pays little attention to the quality of the work done; that he shows a reckless carelessness with regard to his employer's property; that he is capable of taking money in advance and failing to fulfil his contract; that he occasionally gets drunk; and that he is apt to commit certain acts of petty larceny when he gets the chance —all this is undoubtedly true, whatever biassed theorists and sentimental peasant-worshippers may say to the contrary.*

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the fault is entirely on the side of the peasants, and equally erroneous to believe that the evils might be remedied, as is often suggested, by greater severity on the part of the tribunals, or by an improved system of passports. Farming with free labour, like every other department of human activity, requires a fair amount of knowledge, judgment, prudence, and tact, which cannot be replaced by ingenious legislation or

* Amongst themselves the peasants are not addicted to thieving, as is proved by the fact that they habitually leave their doors unlocked when the inmates of the house are working in the fields; but if the muzhik finds in the proprietor's farmyard a piece of iron or a bit of rope, or any of those little things that he constantly requires and has difficulty in obtaining, he is very apt to pick it up and carry it home. Gathering firewood in the landlord's forest he does not consider as theft, because "God planted the trees and watered them," and in the time of serfage he was allowed to supply himself with firewood in this way.

judicial severity. In engaging labourers or servants it is necessary to select them carefully and make such conditions that they feel it to be to their interest to fulfil their contract loyally. This is too often overlooked by the Russian landowners. From false views of economy they are inclined to choose the cheapest labourer without examining closely his other qualifications, or they take advantage of the peasant's pecuniary embarrassments and make with him a contract which it is hardly possible for him to fulfil. In spring, for instance, when his store of provisions is exhausted and he is being hard pressed by the tax-collector, they supply him with rye-meal or advance him a small sum of money on condition of his undertaking to do a relatively large amount of summer work. He knows that the contract is unfair to him, but what is he to do? He must get food for himself and his family, and a little ready money for his taxes, for the Communal authorities will probably sell his cow if he does not pay his arrears.* In desperation he accepts the conditions and puts off the evil day—consoling himself with the reflection that perhaps (*avos'*) something may turn up in the meantime—but when the time comes for fulfilling his engagements the dilemma revives. According to the contract he ought to work nearly the whole summer for the proprietor; but he has his own land to attend to, and he has to make provision for the winter. In such circumstances the temptation to evade the terms of the contract is probably too strong to be resisted.

In Russia, as in other countries, the principle holds true that for good labour a fair price must be paid. Several large proprietors of my acquaintance who

* Until last year (1904) they could use also corporal punishment as a means of pressure, and I am not sure that they do not occasionally use it still, though it is no longer permitted by law.

habitually act on this principle assure me that they always obtain as much good labour as they require. I must add, however, that these fortunate proprietors have the advantage of possessing a comfortable amount of working capital, and are therefore not compelled, as so many of their less fortunate neighbours are, to manage their estates on the hand-to-mouth principle.

It is only, I fear, a minority of the landed proprietors that have grappled successfully with these and other difficulties of their position. As a class they are impoverished and indebted, but this state of things is not due entirely to serf-emancipation. The indebtedness of the Noblesse is a hereditary peculiarity of much older date. By some authorities it is attributed to the laws of Peter the Great, by which all nobles were obliged to spend the best part of their lives in the military or civil service, and to leave the management of their estates to incompetent stewards. However that may be, it is certain that from the middle of the eighteenth century downwards the fact has frequently occupied the attention of the Government, and repeated attempts have been made to alleviate the evil. The Empress Elizabeth, Catherine II., Paul, Alexander I., Nicholas I., Alexander II., and Alexander III. tried successively, as one of the older ukazes expressed it, "to free the Noblesse from debt and from greedy money-lenders, and to prevent hereditary estates from passing into the hands of strangers." The means commonly adopted was the creation of mortgage banks founded and controlled by the Government for the purpose of advancing money to landed proprietors at a comparatively low rate of interest.

These institutions may have been useful to the few who desired to improve their estates, but they certainly

did not cure, and rather tended to foster, the inveterate improvidence of the many. On the eve of the Emancipation the proprietors were indebted to the Government for the sum of 425 millions of roubles, and 69 per cent. of their serfs were mortgaged. A portion of this debt was gradually extinguished by the redemption operation, so that in 1880 over 300 millions had been paid off, but in the meantime new debts were being contracted. In 1873-74 nine private land-mortgage banks were created, and there was such a rush to obtain money from them that their paper was a glut in the market, and became seriously depreciated. When the prices of grain rose in 1875-80 the mortgage debt was diminished, but when they began to fall in 1880 it again increased, and in 1881 it stood at 396 millions. As the rate of interest was felt to be very burdensome there was a strong feeling among the landed proprietors at that time that the Government ought to help them, and in 1883 the nobles of the province of Orel ventured to address the Emperor on the subject. In reply to the address, Alexander III., who had strong Conservative leanings, was graciously pleased to declare in a ukaz that "it was really time to do something to help the Noblesse," and accordingly a new land-mortgage bank for the Noblesse was created. The favourable terms offered by it were taken advantage of to such an extent that in the first four years of its activity (1886-90) it advanced to the proprietors over 200 million roubles. Then came two famine years, and in 1894 the mortgage debt of the Noblesse in that and other credit establishments was estimated at 994 millions. It has since probably increased rather than diminished, for in that year the prices of grain began to fall steadily on all the corn-exchanges of the world, and they have never since recovered.

By means of mortgages some proprietors succeeded in weathering the storm, but many gave up the struggle altogether, and settled in the towns. In the space of thirty years 20,000 of them sold their estates, and thus, between 1861 and 1892, the area of land possessed by the Noblesse diminished 30 per cent.—from 77,804,000 to 55,500,000 *dessyatins*.

This expropriation of the Noblesse, as it is called, was evidently not the result merely of the temporary economic disturbance caused by the abolition of serfage, for as time went on it became more rapid. During the first twenty years the average annual amount of Noblesse-land sold was 517,000 *dessyatins*, and it rose steadily until 1892-96, when it reached the amount of 785,000. As I have already stated, the townward movement of the proprietors was strongest in the barren Northern provinces. In the province of Olonetz, for example, they have already parted with 87 per cent. of their land. In the black-soil region, on the contrary, there is no province in which more than 27 per cent. of the Noblesse-land has been alienated, and in one province (Tula) the amount is only 19 per cent.

The habit of mortgaging and selling estates does not necessarily mean the impoverishment of the landlords as a class. If the capital raised in that way is devoted to agricultural improvements, the result may be an increase of wealth. Unfortunately, in Russia the realised capital was usually not so employed. A very large proportion of it was spent unproductively, partly in luxuries and living abroad, and partly in unprofitable commercial and industrial speculations. The industrial and railway fever which raged at the time induced many to risk and lose their capital, and it had indirectly an injurious effect on all by making money plentiful in the towns, and creating a more

expensive style of living from which the landed gentry could not hold entirely aloof.

So far I have dwelt on the dark shadows of the picture, but it is not all shadow. In the last forty years the production and export of grain, which constitute the chief source of revenue for the Noblesse, have increased enormously, thanks mainly to the improved means of transport. In the first decade after the Emancipation (1860–70) the average annual export did not exceed 88 million *pūds;* in the second decade (1870–80) it leapt up to 218 millions; and so it went up steadily until in the last decade of the century it had reached 388 millions—*i.e.*, over six million tons. At the same time the home trade had increased likewise in consequence of the rapidly growing population of the towns. All this must have enriched the land-proprietors. Not to such an extent, it is true, as the figures seem to indicate, because the old prices could not be maintained. Rye, for example, which in 1868 stood at 129 kopeks per *pūd*, fell as low as 56, and during the rest of the century, except during a short time in 1881–82 and the famine years of 1891–92, when there was very little surplus to sell, it never rose above 80. Still, the increase in quantity more than counterbalanced the fall in price. For example: in 1881 the average price of grain per *pūd* was 119, and in 1894 it had sunk to 59; but the amount exported during that time rose from 203 to 617 million *pūds*, and the sum received for it had risen from 242 to 369 millions of roubles. Surely the whole of that enormous sum was not squandered on luxuries and unprofitable speculation!

The pessimists, however—and in Russia their name is legion—will not admit that any permanent advantage has been derived from this enormous increase in exports. On the contrary, they maintain

that it is a national misfortune, because it is leading rapidly to a state of permanent impoverishment. It quickly exhausted, they say, the large reserves of grain in the villages, so that as soon as there was a very bad harvest the Government had to come to the rescue and feed the starving peasantry. Worse than this, it compromised the future prosperity of the country. Being in pecuniary difficulties, and consequently impatient to make money, the proprietors increased inordinately the area of grain-producing land at the expense of pasturage and forests, with the result that the live stock and the manuring of the land were diminished, the fertility of the soil impaired, and the necessary quantity of moisture in the atmosphere greatly lessened. There is some truth in this contention; but it would seem that the soil and climate have not been affected so much as the pessimists suppose, because in recent years there have been some very good harvests.

On the whole, then, I think it may be justly said that the efforts of the landed proprietors to work their estates without serf labour have not as yet been brilliantly successful. Those who have failed are in the habit of complaining that they have not received sufficient support from the Government, which is accused of having systematically sacrificed the interests of agriculture, the mainstay of the national resources, to the creation of artificial and unnecessary manufacturing industries. How far such complaints and accusations are well founded I shall not attempt to decide. It is a complicated polemical question, into which the reader would probably decline to accompany me. Let us examine rather what influence the above-mentioned changes have had on the peasantry.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE EMANCIPATED PEASANTRY.

The Effects of Liberty—Difficulty of obtaining Accurate Information—Pessimist Testimony of the Proprietors—Vague Replies of the Peasants—My Conclusions in 1877—Necessity of revising them—My Investigations renewed in 1903—Recent Researches by Native Political Economists—Peasant Impoverishment universally recognised—Various Explanations suggested—Demoralisation of the Common People—Peasant Self-Government—Communal System of Land Tenure—Heavy Taxation—Disruption of Peasant Families—Natural Increase of Population—Remedies proposed—Migration—Reclamation of Waste Land—Land-Purchase by Peasantry—Manufacturing Industry—Improvement of Agricultural Methods—Indications of Progress.

AT the commencement of last chapter I pointed out in general terms the difficulty of describing clearly the immediate consequences of the Emancipation. In beginning now to speak of the influence which the great reform has had on the peasantry, I feel that the difficulty has reached its climax. The foreigner who desires merely to gain a general idea of the subject cannot be expected to take an interest in details, and even if he took the trouble to examine them attentively, he would derive from the labour little real information. What he wishes is a clear, concise, and dogmatic statement of general results. Has the material and moral condition of the peasantry improved since the Emancipation? That is the simple question which he has to put, and he naturally expects a simple, categorical answer.

In beginning my researches in this interesting field of inquiry, I had no adequate conception of the difficulties awaiting me. I imagined that I had merely to question intelligent, competent men who

had had abundant opportunities of observation, and to criticise and boil down the information collected; but when I put this method of investigation to the test of experience it proved unsatisfactory. Very soon I came to perceive that my authorities were very far from being impartial observers. Most of them were evidently suffering from shattered illusions. They had expected that the Emancipation would produce instantaneously a wonderful improvement in the life and character of the rural population, and that the peasant would become at once a sober, industrious, model agriculturist.

These expectations were not realised. One year passed, five years passed, ten years passed, and the expected transformation did not take place. On the contrary, there appeared certain very ugly phenomena which were not at all in the programme. The peasants began to drink more and to work less,* and the public life which the Communal institutions produced was by no means of a desirable kind. The "bawlers" (*gorlopány*) acquired a prejudicial influence in the Village Assemblies, and in very many Vólosts the peasant judges, elected by their fellow-villagers, acquired a bad habit of selling their decisions for vodka. The natural consequence of all this was that those who had indulged in exaggerated expectations sank into a state of inordinate despondency, and imagined things to be much worse than they really were.

For different reasons, those who had not indulged in exaggerated expectations, and had not sympathised with the Emancipation in the form in which it was effected, were equally inclined to take a pessimistic view of the situation. In every ugly phenomenon they found a confirmation of their opinions. The

* I am not at all sure that the peasants really drank more, but such was, and still is, a very general conviction.

result was precisely what they had foretold. The peasants had used their liberty and their privileges to their own detriment and to the detriment of others!

The extreme "Liberals" were also inclined, for reasons of their own, to join in the doleful chorus. They desired that the condition of the peasantry should be further improved by legislative enactments, and accordingly they painted the evils in as dark colours as possible.

Thus, from various reasons, the majority of the educated classes were unduly disposed to represent to themselves and to others the actual condition of the peasantry in a very unfavourable light, and I felt that from them there was no hope of obtaining the *lumen siccum* which I desired. I determined, therefore, to try the method of questioning the peasants themselves. Surely they must know whether their condition was better or worse than it had been before their Emancipation.

Again I was doomed to disappointment. A few months' experience sufficed to convince me that my new method was by no means so effectual as I had imagined. Uneducated people rarely make generalisations which have no practical utility, and I feel sure that very few Russian peasants ever put to themselves the question: Am I better off now than I was in the time of serfage? When such a question is put to them they feel taken aback. And in truth it is no easy matter to sum up the two sides of the account and draw an accurate balance, save in those exceptional cases in which the proprietor flagrantly abused his authority. The present money-dues and taxes are often more burdensome than the labour-dues in the old times. If the serfs had a great many ill-defined obligations to fulfil—such as the carting of the master's grain to market, the preparing

of his firewood, the supplying him with eggs, chickens, home-made linen, and the like—they had, on the other hand, a good many ill-defined privileges. They grazed their cattle during a part of the year on the manor-land; they received firewood and occasionally logs for repairing their huts; sometimes the proprietor lent them or gave them a cow or a horse when they had been visited by the cattle-plague or the horse-stealer; and in times of famine they could look to their master for support. All this has now come to an end. Their burdens and their privileges have been swept away together, and been replaced by clearly defined, unbending, unelastic legal relations. They have now to pay the market-price for every stick of firewood which they burn, for every log which they require for repairing their houses, and for every rood of land on which to graze their cattle. Nothing is now to be had gratis. The demand to pay is encountered at every step. If a cow dies or a horse is stolen, the owner can no longer go to the proprietor with the hope of receiving a present, or at least a loan without interest, but must, if he has no ready money, apply to the village usurer, who probably considers twenty or thirty per cent. as a by no means exorbitant rate of interest.

Besides this, from the economic point of view village life has been completely revolutionised. Formerly the members of a peasant family obtained from their ordinary domestic resources nearly all they required. Their food came from their fields, cabbage-garden, and farmyard. Materials for clothing were supplied by their plots of flax and their sheep, and were worked up into linen and cloth by the female members of the household. Fuel, as I have said, and torches wherewith to light the *izbà*—for oil was too expensive and petroleum was unknown

—were obtained gratis. Their sheep, cattle, and horses were bred at home, and their agricultural implements, except in so far as a little iron was required, could be made by themselves without any pecuniary expenditure. Money was required only for the purchase of a few cheap domestic utensils, such as pots, pans, knives, hatchets, wooden dishes and spoons, and for the payment of taxes, which were small in amount and often paid by the proprietor. In these circumstances the quantity of money in circulation among the peasants was infinitesimally small, the few exchanges which took place in a village being generally effected by barter. The taxes and the vodka required for village festivals, weddings, or funerals, were the only large items of expenditure for the year, and they were generally covered by the sums brought home by the members of the family who went to work in the towns.

Very different is the present condition of affairs. The spinning, weaving, and other home industries have been killed by the big factories, and the flax and wool have to be sold to raise a little ready money for the numerous new items of expenditure. Everything has to be bought—clothes, firewood, petroleum, improved agricultural implements, and many other articles which are now regarded as necessaries of life—whilst comparatively little is earned by working in the towns, because the big families have been broken up, and a household now consists usually of husband and wife, who must both remain at home, and children who are not yet bread-winners. Recalling to mind all these things and the other drawbacks and advantages of his actual position, the old muzhik has naturally much difficulty in striking a balance, and he may well be quite sincere when, on being asked whether things now are on the whole better or worse

than in the time of serfage, he scratches the back of his head and replies hesitatingly, with a mystified expression on his wrinkled face: "How shall I say to you? They are both better and worse!" ("*Kak vam skazát'? I lûtche i khûdzhe!*") If, however, you press him further, and ask whether he would himself like to return to the old state of things, he is pretty sure to answer, with a slow shake of the head and a twinkle in his eye, as if some forgotten item in the account had suddenly recurred to him: "Oh, no!"

What materially increases the difficulty of this general computation is that great changes have taken place in the well-being of the particular households. Some have greatly prospered, while others have become impoverished. That is one of the most characteristic consequences of the Emancipation. In the old times the general economic stagnation and the uncontrolled authority of the proprietor tended to keep all the households of a village on the same level. There was little opportunity for an intelligent, enterprising serf to become rich, and if he contrived to increase his revenue, he had probably to give a considerable share of it to the proprietor, unless he had the good fortune to belong to a *grand seigneur* like Count Sheremétief, who was proud of having rich men among his serfs.

On the other hand, the proprietor, for evident reasons of self-interest, as well as from benevolent motives, prevented the less intelligent and less enterprising members of the Commune from becoming bankrupt. The Communal equality thus artificially maintained has now disappeared, the restrictions on individual freedom of action have been removed, the struggle for life has become intensified, and, as always happens in such circumstances, the strong men go up in the world while the weak ones go to the wall.

All over the country we find on the one hand the beginnings of a village aristocracy—or perhaps we should call it a plutocracy, for it is based on money—and on the other hand an ever-increasing pauperism. Some peasants possess capital, with which they buy land outside the Commune or embark in trade, while others have to sell their live stock, and have sometimes to cede to neighbours their share of the Communal property. This change in rural life is so often referred to that, in order to express it, a new, barbarous word, *differentsiatsia* (differentiation) has been invented.

Hoping to obtain fuller information with the aid of official protection, I attached myself to one of the travelling sections of an agricultural Commission appointed by the Government, and during a whole summer I helped to collect materials in the provinces bordering on the Volga. The inquiry resulted in a gigantic report of nearly 2,500 folio pages, but the general conclusions were extremely vague. The peasantry, it was said, were passing, like the landed proprietors, through a period of transition, in which the main features of their future normal life had not yet become clearly defined. In some localities their condition had decidedly improved, whereas in others it had improved little or not at all. Then followed a long list of recommendations in favour of Government assistance, better agronomic education, competitive exhibitions, more varied rotation of crops, and greater zeal on the part of the clergy in disseminating among the people moral principles in general and love of work in particular.

Not greatly enlightened by this official activity, I returned to my private studies, and at the end of six years I published my impressions and conclusions in the first edition of this work. While recognising that

there was much uncertainty as to the future, I was inclined, on the whole, to take a hopeful view of the situation. I was unable, however, to maintain permanently that comfortable frame of mind. After my departure from Russia in 1878, the accounts which reached me from various parts of the country became blacker and blacker, and were partly confirmed by short tours which I made in 1889–96. At last, in the summer of 1903, I determined to return to some of my old haunts and look at things with my own eyes. At that moment some hospitable friends invited me to pay them a visit at their country-house in the province of Smolensk, and I gladly accepted the invitation because Smolensk, when I knew it formerly, was one of the poorest provinces, and I thought it well to begin my new studies by examining the impoverishment, of which I had heard so much, at its maximum.

From the railway station at Viazma, where I arrived one morning at sunrise, I had some twenty miles to drive, and as soon as I got clear of the little town I began my observations. What I saw around me seemed to contradict the sombre accounts I had received. The villages through which I passed had not at all the look of dilapidation and misery which I expected. On the contrary, the houses were larger and better constructed than they used to be, and each of them had a chimney! That latter fact was important, because formerly a large proportion of the peasants of this region had no such luxury, and allowed the smoke to find its exit by the open door. In vain I looked for a hut of the old type, and my *yamstchik* assured me I should have to go a long way to find one. Then I noticed a good many iron ploughs of the European model, and my *yamstchik* informed me that their predecessor, the *sokhá*, with which I had

been so familiar, had entirely disappeared from the district. Next I noticed that in the neighbourhood of the villages flax was grown in large quantities. That was certainly not an indication of poverty, because flax is a valuable product which requires to be well manured, and plentiful manure implies a considerable quantity of live-stock. Lastly, before arriving at my destination, I noticed clover being grown in the fields. This made me open my eyes with astonishment, because the introduction of artificial grasses into the traditional rotation of crops indicates the transition to a higher and more intensive system of agriculture. As I had never seen clover in Russia except on the estates of very advanced proprietors, I said to my *yamstchik* :—

"Listen, little brother! That field belongs to the landlord?"

"Not at all, Master; it is muzhik-land."

On arriving at the country-house I told my friends what I had seen, and they explained it to me. Smolensk is no longer one of the poorer provinces; it has become comparatively prosperous. In two or three districts large quantities of flax are produced and give the cultivators a big revenue; in other districts plenty of remunerative work is supplied by the forests. Everywhere a considerable proportion of the younger men go regularly to the towns and bring home savings enough to pay the taxes and make a little surplus in the domestic budget. A few days afterwards the village secretary brought me his books, and showed me that there were practically no arrears of taxation.

Passing on to other provinces, I found similar proofs of progress and prosperity, but at the same time not a few indications of impoverishment; and I was rapidly relapsing into my previous state of un-

certainty as to whether any general conclusions could be drawn, when an old friend, himself a first-rate authority, with many years of practical experience, came to my assistance.* He informed me that a number of specialists had recently made detailed investigations into the present economic conditions of the rural population, and he kindly placed at my disposal, in his charming country-house near Moscow, the voluminous researches of these investigators. Here, during a good many weeks, I revelled in the statistical materials collected, and to the best of my ability I tested the conclusions drawn from them. Many of these conclusions I had to dismiss with the Scotch verdict of "not proven," whilst others seemed to me worthy of acceptance. Of these latter the most important were those drawn from the arrears of taxation.

The arrears in the payment of taxes may be regarded as a pretty safe barometer for testing the condition of the rural population, because the peasant habitually pays his rates and taxes when he has the means of doing so; when he falls seriously and permanently into arrears, it may be assumed that he is becoming impoverished. If the arrears fluctuate from year to year, the causes of the impoverishment may be regarded as accidental and perhaps temporary, but if they steadily accumulate, we must conclude that there is something radically wrong. Bearing these facts in mind, let us hear what the statistics say.

During the first twenty years after the Emancipation (1861–81) things went on in their old grooves. The poor provinces remained poor, and the fertile provinces showed no signs of distress. During the next twenty years (1881–1901) the arrears of the whole of

* I hope I am committing no indiscretion when I say that the old friend in question was Prince Alexander Stcherbátof of Vasiliefskoe.

European Russia rose, roughly speaking, from 27 to 144 millions of roubles, and the increase, strange to say, took place in the fertile provinces. In 1890, for example, out of 52 millions, nearly 41 millions, or 78 per cent., fell to the share of the provinces of the Black-Earth Zone. In seven of these the average arrears per male, which had been in 1882 only 90 kopeks, rose in 1893 to 600, and in 1899 to 2,200! And this accumulation had taken place in spite of reductions of taxation to the extent of 37 million roubles in 1881–83, and successive famine grants from the Treasury in 1891–99 to the amount of 203 millions.* On the other hand, in the provinces with a poor soil the arrears had greatly decreased. In Smolensk, for example, they had sunk from 202 per cent. to 13 per cent. of the annual sum to be paid, and in nearly all the other provinces of the west and north a similar change for the better had taken place.

These and many other figures which I might quote show that a great and very curious economic revolution has been gradually effected. The Black-Earth Zone, which was formerly regarded as the inexhaustible granary of the Empire, has become impoverished, whilst the provinces which were formerly regarded as hopelessly poor are now in a comparatively flourishing condition. This fact has been officially recognised. In a classification of the provinces according to their degree of prosperity, drawn up by a special commission of experts in 1903, those with a poor light soil appear at the top, and those with the famous black earth are at the bottom of the list. In the deliberations of the commission, many reasons for this extraordinary state of things are

* In 1901 an additional famine grant of 33½ million roubles had to be made by the Government.

adduced. Most of them have merely a local significance. The big fact, taken as a whole, seems to me to show that, in consequence of certain changes of which I shall speak presently, the peasantry of European Russia can no longer live by the traditional modes of agriculture, even in the most fertile districts, and require for their support some subsidiary occupations such as are practised in the less fertile provinces.

Another sign of impoverishment is the decrease in the quantity of live-stock. According to the very imperfect statistics available, for every hundred inhabitants the number of horses has decreased from 26 to 17, the number of cattle from 36 to 25, and the number of sheep from 73 to 40. This is a serious matter, because it means that the land is not so well manured and cultivated as formerly, and is consequently not so productive. Several economists have attempted to fix precisely to what extent the productivity has decreased, but I confess I have little faith in the accuracy of their conclusions. M. Polênof, for example, a most able and conscientious investigator, calculates that between 1861 and 1895, all over Russia, the amount of food produced, in relation to the number of the population, has decreased by seven per cent. His methods of calculation are ingenious, but the statistical data with which he operates are so far from accurate that his conclusions on this point have, in my opinion, little or no scientific value. With all due deference to Russian economists I may say parenthetically that they are very fond of juggling with carelessly collected statistics, as if their data were mathematical quantities.

Several of the Zemstvos have grappled with this question of peasant impoverishment, and the data which they have collected make a very doleful impression.

In the province of Moscow, for example, a careful investigation gave the following results: forty per cent. of the peasant households had no longer any horses, fifteen per cent. had given up agriculture altogether, and about ten per cent. had no longer any land. We must not, however, assume, as is often done, that the peasant families who have no live-stock and no longer till the land are utterly ruined. In reality many of them are better off than their neighbours who appear as prosperous in the official statistics, having found profitable occupation in the home industries, in the towns, in the factories, or on the estates of the landed proprietors. It must be remembered that Moscow is the centre of one of the regions in which manufacturing industry has progressed with gigantic strides during the last half-century, and it would be strange indeed if, in such a region, the peasantry who supply the labour to the towns and factories remained thriving agriculturists. That many Russians are surprised and horrified at the actual state of things shows to what an extent the educated classes are still under the illusion that Russia can create for herself a manufacturing industry capable of competing with that of Western Europe without uprooting from the soil a portion of her rural population.

It is only in the purely agricultural regions that families officially classed as belonging to the peasantry may be regarded as on the brink of pauperism because they have no live-stock, and even with regard to them I should hesitate to make such an assumption, because the muzhiks, as I have already had occasion to remark, have strange nomadic habits unknown to the rural population of other countries. It is a mistake, therefore, to calculate the Russian peasant's budget exclusively on the basis of local resources.

To the pessimists who assure me that according to their calculations the peasantry in general *must be* on the brink of starvation, I reply that there are many facts, even in the statistical tables on which they rely, which run counter to their deductions. Let me quote one by way of illustration. The total amount of deposits in savings banks, about one-fourth of which is believed to belong to the rural population, rose in the course of six years (1894–1900) from 347 to 680 millions of roubles. Besides the savings banks, there existed in the rural districts on 1st Dec. 1902 no less than 1,614 small-credit institutions, with a total capital (1st Jan. 1901) of 69 million roubles, of which only 4,653,000 had been advanced by the State Bank and the Zemstvo, the remainder coming in from private sources. This is not much for a big country like Russia, but it is a beginning, and it suggests that the impoverishment is not so severe and so universal as the pessimists would have us believe.

There is thus room for differences of opinion as to how far the peasantry have become impoverished, but there is no doubt that their condition is far from satisfactory, and we have to face the important problem why the abolition of serfage has not produced the beneficent consequences which even moderate men so confidently predicted, and how the present unsatisfactory state of things is to be remedied.

The most common explanation among those who have never seriously studied the subject is that it all comes from the demoralisation of the common people. In this view there is a modicum of truth. That the peasantry injure their material welfare by drunkenness and improvidence there can be no reasonable doubt, as is shown by the comparatively flourishing state of certain villages of Old Ritualists and Molokánye in which there is no drunkenness, and in which

the community exercises a strong moral control over the individual members. If the Orthodox Church could make the peasantry refrain from the inordinate use of strong drink as effectually as it makes them refrain during a great part of the year from animal food, and if it could instil into their minds a few simple moral principles as successfully as it has inspired them with a belief in the efficacy of the Sacraments, it would certainly confer on them an inestimable benefit. But this is not to be expected. The great majority of the parish priests are quite unfit for such a task, and the few who have aspirations in that direction rarely acquire a perceptible moral influence over their parishioners.

Perhaps more is to be expected from the schoolmaster than from the priest, but it will be long before the schools can produce even a partial moral regeneration. Their first influence, strange as the assertion may seem, is often in a diametrically opposite direction. When only a few peasants in a village can read and write they have such facilities for overreaching their "dark" neighbours that they are apt to employ their knowledge for dishonest purposes; and thus it occasionally happens that the man who has the most education is the greatest scoundrel in the *Mir*. Such facts are often used by the opponents of popular education, but in reality they supply a good reason for disseminating primary education as rapidly as possible. When all the peasants have learned to read and write they will present a less inviting field for swindling, and the temptations to dishonesty will be proportionately diminished. Meanwhile, it is only fair to state that the common assertions about drunkenness being greatly on the increase are not borne out by the official statistics concerning the consumption of spirituous liquors.

After drunkenness the besetting sin which is supposed to explain the impoverishment of the peasantry is incorrigible laziness. On that subject I feel inclined to put in a plea of extenuating circumstances in favour of the muzhik. Certainly he is very slow in his movements—slower perhaps than the English rustic—and he has a marvellous capacity for wasting valuable time without any perceptible qualms of conscience; but he is in this respect, if I may use a favourite phrase of the Social Scientists, "the product of environment." To the proprietors who habitually reproach him with time-wasting he might reply with a very strong *tu quoque* argument, and to all the other classes the argument might likewise be addressed. The St. Petersburg official, for example, who writes edifying disquisitions about peasant indolence, considers that for himself attendance at his office for four hours, a large portion of which is devoted to the unproductive labour of cigarette smoking, constitutes a very fair day's work. The truth is that in Russia the struggle for life is not nearly so intense as in more densely populated countries, and society is so constituted that all can live without very strenuous exertion. The Russians seem, therefore, to the traveller who comes from the West an indolent, apathetic race. If the traveller happens to come from the East—especially if he has been living among pastoral races—the Russians will appear to him energetic and laborious. Their character in this respect corresponds to their geographical position: they stand midway between the laborious, painstaking, industrious population of Western Europe and the indolent, undisciplined, spasmodically energetic populations of Central Asia. They are capable of effecting much by vigorous, intermittent effort—witness the peasant at harvest time, or the St. Peters-

burg official when some big legislative project has to be submitted to the Emperor within a given time—but they have not yet learned regular laborious habits. In short, the Russians might move the world if it could be done by a jerk, but they are still deficient in that calm perseverance and dogged tenacity which characterise the Teutonic race.

Without seeking further to determine how far the moral defects of the peasantry have a deleterious influence on their material welfare, I proceed to examine the external causes which are generally supposed to contribute largely to their impoverishment, and will deal first with the evils of peasant self-government.

That the peasant self-government is very far from being in a satisfactory condition must be admitted by any impartial observer. The more laborious and well-to-do peasants, unless they wish to abuse their position directly or indirectly for their own advantage, try to escape election as office-bearers, and leave the administration in the hands of the less respectable members. Not unfrequently a *Vólost* Elder trades with the money he collects as dues or taxes; and sometimes, when he becomes insolvent, the peasants have to pay their taxes and dues a second time. The Village Assemblies, too, have become worse than they were in the days of serfage. At that time the Heads of Households—who, it must be remembered, have alone a voice in the decisions—were few in number, laborious, and well-to-do, and they kept the lazy, unruly members under strict control. Now that the large families have been broken up, and almost every adult peasant is Head of a Household, the Communal affairs are sometimes decided by a noisy majority; and certain Communal decisions may be obtained by "treating the *Mir*"—that is to say, by supplying a

certain amount of vodka. Often I have heard old peasants speak of these things, and finish their recital by some such remark as this: "There is no order now; the people have been spoiled; it was better in the time of the masters."

These evils are very real, and I have no desire to extenuate them, but I believe they are by no means so great as is commonly supposed. If the lazy, worthless members of the Commune had really the direction of Communal affairs we should find that in the Northern Agricultural Zone, where it is necessary to manure the soil, the periodical redistributions of the Communal land would be very frequent; for in a new distribution the lazy peasant has a good chance of getting a well-manured lot in exchange for the lot which he has exhausted. In reality, so far as my observations extend, these general distributions of the land are not more frequent than they were before.

Of the various functions of the peasant self-government the judicial are perhaps the most frequently and the most severely criticised. And certainly not without reason, for the *Vólost* courts are too often accessible to the influence of alcohol, and in some districts the peasants say that he who becomes a judge takes a sin on his soul. I am not at all sure, however, that it would be well to abolish these courts altogether, as some people propose. In many respects they are better suited to peasant requirements than the ordinary tribunals. Their procedure is infinitely simpler, more expeditious, and incomparably less expensive, and they are guided by traditional custom and plain common-sense, whereas the ordinary tribunals have to judge according to the civil law, which is unknown to the peasantry and not always applicable to their affairs. Few ordinary judges have a suffi-

ciently intimate knowledge of the minute details of peasant life to be able to decide fairly the cases that are brought before the *Vólost* Courts; and even if a justice had sufficient knowledge he could not adopt the moral and juridical notions of the peasantry. These are often very different from those of the upper classes. In cases of matrimonial separation, for instance, the educated man naturally assumes that, if there is any question of aliment, it should be paid by the husband to the wife. The peasant, on the contrary, assumes as naturally that it should be paid by the wife to the husband—or rather to the Head of the Household—as a compensation for the loss of labour which her desertion involves. In like manner, according to traditional peasant-law, if an unmarried son is working away from home, his earnings do not belong to himself, but to the family, and in a *Vólost* Court they could be claimed by the Head of the Household.

Occasionally, it is true, the peasant judges allow their respect for old traditional conceptions in general, and for the authority of parents in particular, to carry them a little too far. I was told lately of one affair which took place not long ago, within a hundred miles of Moscow, in which the judges decided that a respectable young peasant should be flogged because he refused to give his father the money he earned as groom in the service of a neighbouring proprietor, though it was notorious in the district that the father was a disreputable old drunkard who carried to the *kabak* (gin-shop) all the money he could obtain by fair means and foul. When I remarked to my informant, who was not an admirer of peasant institutions, that the incident reminded me of the respect for the *patria potestas* in old Roman times, he stared at me with a look of surprise and indignation, and

exclaimed laconically, "*Patria potestas?* . . . . *Vodka!*" He was evidently convinced that the disreputable old father had got his respectable son flogged by "treating" the judges. In such cases flogging can no longer be used, for the *Vólost* Courts, as we have seen, were recently deprived of the right to inflict corporal punishment.

These administrative and judicial abuses gradually reached the ears of the Government, and in 1889 it attempted to remove them by creating a body of Rural Supervisors (*Zemskiye Natchalniki*). Under their supervision and control some abuses may have been occasionally prevented or corrected, and some rascally *Vólost* Secretaries may have been punished or dismissed, but the peasant self-government as a whole has not been perceptibly improved.

Let us glance now at the opinions of those who hold that the material progress of the peasantry is prevented chiefly, not by the mere abuses of the Communal administration, but by the essential principles of the Communal institutions, and especially by the practice of periodically redistributing the Communal land. From the theoretical point of view this question is one of great interest, and it may acquire in the future an immense practical significance; but for the present it has not, in my opinion, the importance which is usually attributed to it. There can be no doubt that it is much more difficult to farm well on a large number of narrow strips of land, many of which are at a great distance from the farmyard, than on a compact piece of land which the farmer may divide and cultivate as he pleases; and there can be as little doubt that the husbandman is more likely to improve his land if his tenure is secure. All this, and much more of the same kind, must be accepted as indis-

putable truth, but it has little direct bearing on the practical question under consideration. We are not considering in the abstract whether it would be better that the peasant should be a farmer with abundant capital and all the modern scientific appliances, but simply the practical question, What are the obstructions which at present prevent the peasant from ameliorating his actual condition?

That the Commune prevents its members from adopting various systems of high farming is a supposition which scarcely requires serious consideration. The peasants do not yet think of any such radical innovations; and if they did, they have neither the knowledge nor the capital necessary to effect them. In many villages a few of the richer and more intelligent peasants have bought land outside of the Commune and cultivate it as they please, free from all Communal restraints; and I have always found that they cultivate this property precisely in the same way as their share of the Communal land. As to minor changes, we know by experience that the *Mir* opposes to them no serious obstacles. The cultivation of beet for the production of sugar has greatly increased in the central and south-western provinces, and flax is now largely produced in Communes in northern districts where it was formerly cultivated merely for domestic use. The Communal system is, in fact, extremely elastic, and may be modified as soon as the majority of the members consider modifications profitable. When the peasants begin to think of permanent improvements, such as drainage, irrigation, and the like, they will find the Communal institutions a help rather than an obstruction; for such improvements, if undertaken at all, must be undertaken on a large scale, and the *Mir* is an already existing association. The only permanent improvements which

can be for the present profitably undertaken consist in the reclaiming of waste land; and such improvements are already sometimes attempted. I know at least of one case in which a Commune in the province of Yaroslavl has reclaimed a considerable tract of waste land by means of hired labourers. Nor does the *Mir* prevent in this respect individual initiative. In many Communes of the northern provinces it is a received principle of customary law that if any member reclaims waste land he is allowed to retain possession of it for a number of years proportionate to the amount of labour expended.

But does not the Commune, as it exists, prevent good cultivation according to the mode of agriculture actually in use?

Except in the far north and the Steppe region, where the agriculture is of a peculiar kind, adapted to the local conditions, the peasants invariably till their land according to the ordinary three-field system, in which good cultivation means, practically speaking, the plentiful use of manure. Does, then, the existence of the *Mir* prevent the peasants from manuring their fields well?

Many people who speak on this subject in an authoritative tone seem to imagine that the peasants in general do not manure their fields at all. This idea is an utter mistake. In those regions, it is true, where the rich black soil still retains a large part of its virgin fertility, the manure is used as fuel, or simply thrown away, because the peasants believe that it would not be profitable to put it on their fields, and their conviction is, at least to some extent, well founded;* but in the Northern Agricultural Zone,

* As recently as two years ago (1903) I found that one of the most intelligent and energetic landlords of the province of Vorónezh followed in this respect the example of the peasants, and he assured me that he had proved by experience the advantage of doing so.

where unmanured soil gives almost no harvest, the peasants put upon their fields all the manure they possess. If they do not put enough it is simply because they have not sufficient live-stock.

It is only in the southern provinces, where no manure is required, that periodical redistributions take place frequently. As we travel northward we find the term lengthens; and in the Northern Agricultural Zone, where manure is indispensable, general redistributions are extremely rare. In the province of Yaroslavl, for example, the Communal land is generally divided into two parts: the manured land lying near the village, and the unmanured land lying beyond. The latter alone is subject to frequent redistribution. On the former the existing tenures are rarely disturbed, and when it becomes necessary to give a share to a new household, the change is effected with the least possible prejudice to vested rights.

The policy of the Government has always been to admit redistributions in principle, but to prevent their too frequent recurrence. For this purpose the Emancipation Law stipulated that they could be decreed only by a three-fourths majority of the Village Assembly, and in 1893 a further obstacle was created by a law providing that the minimum term between two redistributions should be twelve years, and that they should never be undertaken without the sanction of the Rural Supervisor.

A certain number of Communes have made the experiment of transforming the Communal tenure into hereditary allotments, and its only visible effect has been that the allotments accumulate in the hands of the richer and more enterprising peasants, and the poorer members of the Commune become landless, while the primitive system of agriculture remains unimproved.

Up to this point I have dealt with the so-called causes of peasant impoverishment which are much talked of, but which are, in my opinion, only of secondary importance. I pass now to those which are more tangible and which have exerted on the condition of the peasantry a more palpable influence. And, first, inordinate taxation.

This is a very big subject, on which a bulky volume might be written, but I shall cut it very short, because I know that the ordinary reader does not like to be bothered with voluminous financial statistics. Briefly, then, the peasant has to pay three kinds of direct taxation: Imperial to the Central Government, local to the Zemstvo, and Communal to the *Mïr* and the *Vólost;* and besides these he has to pay a yearly sum for the redemption of the land-allotment which he received at the time of the Emancipation. Taken together, these form a heavy burden, but for ten or twelve years the emancipated peasantry bore it patiently, without falling very deeply into arrears. Then began to appear symptoms of distress, especially in the provinces with a poor soil, and in 1872 the Government appointed a Commission of Inquiry, in which I had the privilege of taking part unofficially. The inquiry showed that something ought to be done, but at that moment the Government was so busy with administrative reforms and with trying to develop industry and commerce that it had little time to devote to studying and improving the economic position of the silent, long-suffering muzhik.

It was not till nearly ten years later, when the Government began to feel the pinch of the ever-increasing arrears, that it recognised the necessity of relieving the rural population. For this purpose it abolished the salt-tax and the poll-tax and repeatedly lessened the burden of the redemption

payments. At a later period (1899) it afforded further relief by an important reform in the mode of collecting the direct taxes. From the police, who often ruined peasant householders by applying distraint indiscriminately, the collection of taxes was transferred to special authorities who took into consideration the temporary pecuniary embarrassments of the taxpayers. Another benefit conferred on the peasantry by this reform is that an individual member of the Commune is no longer responsible for the fiscal obligations of the Commune as a whole.

Since these alleviations have been granted the annual total demanded from the peasantry for direct taxation and land-redemption payments is 173 million roubles, and the average annual sum to be paid by each peasant household varies, according to the locality, from 11½ to 20 roubles (21s. 6d. to 40s.). In addition to this annuity there is a heavy burden of accumulated arrears, especially in the central and eastern provinces, which amounted in 1899 to 143 millions. Of the indirect taxes I can say nothing definite, because it is impossible to calculate, even approximately, the share of them which falls on the rural population, but they must not be left out of account. During the ten years of M. Witte's term of office the revenue of the Imperial Treasury was nearly doubled, and though the increase was due partly to improvements in the financial administration, we can hardly believe that the peasantry did not in some measure contribute to it. In any case, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for them, under actual conditions, to improve their economic position. On that point all Russian economists are agreed. One of the most competent and sober-minded of them, M. Schwanebach, calculates that the head of a peasant household, after deducting the grain required to feed his family, has to pay into

the Imperial Treasury, according to the district in which he resides, from 25 to 100 per cent. of his agricultural revenue. If that ingenious calculation is even approximately correct, we must conclude that further financial reforms are urgently required, especially in those provinces where the population live exclusively by agriculture.

Heavy as the burden of taxation undoubtedly is, it might perhaps be borne without very serious inconvenience if the peasant families could utilise productively all their time and strength. Unfortunately, in the existing economic organisation a great deal of their time and energy is necessarily wasted. Their economic life was radically dislocated by the Emancipation, and they have not yet succeeded in reorganising it according to the new conditions.

In the time of serfage an estate formed, from the economic point of view, a co-operative agricultural association, under a manager who possessed unlimited authority, and sometimes abused it, but who was generally worldly-wise enough to understand that the prosperity of the whole required the prosperity of the component parts. By the abolition of serfage the association was dissolved and liquidated, and the strong, compact whole fell into a heap of independent units, with separate and often mutually hostile interests. Some of the disadvantages of this change for the peasantry I have already enumerated above. The most important I have now to mention. In virtue of the Emancipation Law each family received an amount of land which tempted it to continue farming on its own account, but which did not enable it to earn a living and pay its rates and taxes. The peasant thus became a kind of amphibious creature—half farmer and half something else—cultivating his allotment for

a portion of his daily bread, and obliged to have some other occupation wherewith to cover the inevitable deficit in his domestic budget. If he was fortunate enough to find near his home a bit of land to be let at a reasonable rent, he might cultivate it in addition to his own and thereby gain a livelihood; but if he had not the good luck to find such a piece of land in the immediate neighbourhood, he had to look for some subsidiary occupation in which to employ his leisure time; and where was such occupation to be found in an ordinary Russian village? In former years he might have employed himself perhaps in carting the proprietor's grain to distant markets or still more distant seaports, but that means of making a little money has been destroyed by the extension of railways. Practically, then, he is now obliged to choose between two alternatives: either to farm his allotment and spend a great part of the year in idleness, or to leave the cultivation of his allotment to his wife and children and to seek employment elsewhere—often at such a distance that his earnings hardly cover the expenses of the journey. In either case much time and energy are wasted.

The evil results of this state of things were intensified by another change which was brought about by the Emancipation. In the time of serfage the peasant families, as I have already remarked, were usually very large. They remained undivided, partly from the influence of patriarchal conceptions, but chiefly because the proprietors, recognising the advantage of large units, prevented them from breaking up. As soon as the proprietor's authority was removed, the process of disintegration began and spread rapidly. Everyone wished to be independent, and in a very short time nearly every able-bodied married peasant had a house of his own. The

economic consequences were disastrous. A large amount of money had to be expended in constructing new houses and farmsteadings; and the old habit of one male member remaining at home to cultivate the land allotment with the female members of the family whilst the others went to earn wages elsewhere had to be abandoned. Many large families, which had been prosperous and comfortable—rich according to peasant conceptions—dissolved into three or four small ones, all on the brink of pauperism.

The last cause of peasant impoverishment that I have to mention is perhaps the most important of all: I mean the natural increase of population without a corresponding increase in the means of subsistence. Since the Emancipation in 1861 the population has nearly doubled, whilst the amount of Communal land has remained the same. It is not surprising, therefore, that when talking with peasants about their actual condition, one constantly hears the despairing cry, "*Zemlí malo!*" ("There is not enough land"); and one notices that those who look a little ahead ask anxiously: "What is to become of our children? Already the Communal allotment is too small for our wants, and the land outside is doubling and trebling in price! What will it be in the future?" At the same time, not a few Russian economists tell us—and their apprehensions are shared by foreign observers—that millions of peasants are in danger of starvation in the near future.

Must we, then, accept for Russia the Malthus doctrine that population increases more rapidly than the means of subsistence, and that starvation can be avoided only by plague, pestilence, war, and other destructive forces? I think not. It is quite true that, if the amount of land actually possessed by the peasantry and the present system of cultivating it

remained unchanged, semi-starvation would be the inevitable result within a comparatively short space of time; but the danger can be averted, and the proper remedies are not far to seek. If Russia is suffering from over-population it must be her own fault, for she is, with the exception of Norway and Sweden, the most thinly populated country in Europe, and she has more than her share of fertile soil and mineral resources.

A glance at the map in Volume I. showing the density of population in the various provinces suggests an obvious remedy, and I am happy to say it is already being applied. The population of the congested districts of the centre is gradually spreading out, like a drop of oil on a sheet of soft paper, towards the more thinly populated regions of the south and east. In this way the vast region containing millions and millions of acres which lies to the north of the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian, and Central Asia is yearly becoming more densely peopled, and agriculture is steadily encroaching on the pastoral area. Breeders of sheep and cattle, who formerly lived and throve in the western portion of that great expanse, are being pushed eastwards by the rapid increase in the value of land, and their place is being taken by enterprising tillers of the soil. Further north another stream of emigration is flowing into Central Siberia. It does not flow so rapidly, because in that part of the Empire, unlike the bare, fertile Steppes of the south, the land has to be cleared before the seed can be sown, and the pioneer colonists have to work hard for a year or two before they get any return for their labour; but the Government and private societies come to their assistance, and for the last twenty years their numbers have been steadily increasing. During the ten years 1886–96 the annual contingent rose from

25,000 to 200,000, and the total number amounted to nearly 800,000. For the subsequent period I have not been able to obtain the official statistics, but a friend who has access to the official sources of information on this subject assures me that during the last twelve years about four millions of peasants from European Russia have been successfully settled in Siberia.

Even in the European portion of the Empire millions of acres which are at present unproductive might be utilised. Anyone who has travelled by rail from Berlin to St. Petersburg must have noticed how the landscape suddenly changes its character as soon as he has crossed the frontier. Leaving a prosperous agricultural country, he traverses for many weary hours a region in which there is hardly a sign of human habitation, though the soil and climate of that region resemble closely the soil and climate of East Prussia. The difference lies in the amount of labour and capital expended. According to official statistics the area of European Russia contains, roughly speaking, 406 millions of *dessyatins*, of which 78 millions, or 19 per cent., are classified as *neudobniya*, unfit for cultivation; 157 millions, or 39 per cent., as forest; 106 millions, or 26 per cent., as arable land; and 65 millions, or 16 per cent., as pasturage. Thus the arable and pasture land compose only 42 per cent., or considerably less than half of the area. Of the land classed as unfit for cultivation—19 per cent. of the whole—a large portion, including the perennially frozen *tundri* of the far north, must ever remain unproductive; but in latitudes with a milder climate this category of land is for the most part ordinary morass or swamp, which can be transformed into pasturage, or even into arable land, by drainage at a moderate cost. As a proof of this statement I may cite the draining of the great

Pinsk swamps, which was begun by the Government in 1872. If we may trust an official report of the progress of the works in 1897, an area of 2,855,000 *dessyatins* (more than seven and a half million acres) had been drained at an average cost of about three shillings an acre, and the price of land had risen from four to twenty-eight roubles per *dessyatin*.

Reclamation of marshes might be undertaken elsewhere on a much more moderate scale. The observant traveller on the highways and byways of the northern provinces must have noticed on the banks of almost every stream many acres of marshy land producing merely reeds or coarse, rank grass that no well-brought-up animal would look at. With a little elementary knowledge of engineering and the expenditure of a moderate amount of manual labour these marshes might be converted into excellent pasture or even into highly productive kitchen gardens; but the peasants have not yet learned to take advantage of such opportunities, and the reformers, who deal only in large projects and scientific panaceas for the cure of impoverishment, consider such trifles as unworthy of their attention. The Scotch proverb that if the pennies be well looked after, the pounds will look after themselves, contains a bit of homely wisdom totally unknown to the Russian educated classes.

After the morasses, swamps, and marshes come the forests, constituting 39 per cent. of the whole area, and the question naturally arises whether some portions of them might not be advantageously transformed into pasturage or arable land. In the south and east they have been diminished to such an extent as to affect the climate injuriously, so that the area of them should be increased rather than lessened; but in the northern provinces the vast expanses of forest, covering millions of acres, might perhaps be curtailed

with advantage. The proprietors prefer, however, to keep them in their present condition because they give a modest revenue without any expenditure of capital.

Therein lies the great obstacle to land-reclamation in Russia: it requires an outlay of capital, and capital is extremely scarce in the Empire of the Tsars. Until it becomes more plentiful, the area of arable land and pasturage is not likely to be largely increased, and other means of checking the impoverishment of the peasantry must be adopted.

A less expensive means is suggested by the statistics of foreign trade. In the preceding chapter we have seen that from 1860 to 1900 the average annual export of grain rose steadily from under 1½ millions to over 6 millions of tons. It is evident, therefore, that in the food-supply, so far from there being a deficiency, there has been a large and constantly increasing surplus. If the peasantry have been on short rations, it is not because the quantity of food produced has fallen short of the requirements of the population, but because it has been unequally distributed. The truth is that the large landed proprietors produce more and the peasants less than they consume, and it has naturally occurred to many people that the present state of things might be improved if a portion of the arable land passed, without any socialistic, revolutionary measures, from the one class to the other. This operation began spontaneously soon after the Emancipation. Well-to-do peasants who had saved a little money bought from the proprietors bits of land near their villages and cultivated them in addition to their allotments.

At first this extension of peasant land was confined within very narrow limits, because the peasants had very little capital at their disposal, but in 1882 the Government came to their aid by creating

the Peasant Land Bank, the object of which was to advance money to purchasers of the peasant class on the security of the land purchased, at the rate of 7½ per cent., including sinking fund.* From that moment the purchases increased rapidly. They were made by individual peasants, by rural Communes, and, most of all, by small voluntary associations composed of three, four, or more members. In the course of twenty years (1883–1903) the Bank made 47,791 advances, and in this way were purchased about eighteen million acres. This sounds a very big acquisition, but it will not do much to relieve the pressure on the peasantry as a whole, because it adds only about 6 per cent. to the amount they already possessed in virtue of the Emancipation Law.

Nearly all of this land purchased by the peasantry comes directly or indirectly from the Noblesse, and much more will doubtless pass from the one class to the other if the Government continues to encourage the operation; but already symptoms of a change of policy are apparent. In the higher official regions it is whispered that the existing policy is objectionable from the political point of view, and one sometimes hears the question asked: Is it right and desirable that the Noblesse, who have ever done their duty in serving faithfully the Tsar and Fatherland, and who have ever been the representatives of civilisation and culture in Russian country life, should be gradually expropriated in favour of other and less cultivated social classes? Not a few influential personages are of opinion that such a change is unjust and undesirable, and they argue that it is not advantageous to the peasants themselves, because the price of land has

* This arrangement extinguishes the debt in 34½ years; an additional 1 per cent. extinguishes it in 24½ years. By recent legislation other arrangements are permitted.

risen much more than the rents. It is not at all uncommon, for example, to find that land can be rented at five roubles per *dessyatin*, whereas it cannot be bought under 200 roubles. In that case the peasant can enjoy the use of the land at the moderate rate of 2½ per cent. of the capital value, whereas by purchasing the land with the assistance of the bank he would have to pay, without sinking fund, more than double that rate. The muzhik, however, prefers to be owner of the land, even at a considerable sacrifice. When he can be induced to give his reasons, they are usually formulated thus: "With my own land I can do as I like; if I hire land from the neighbouring proprietor, who knows whether, at the end of the term, he may not raise the rent or refuse to renew the contract at any price?"

Even if the Government should continue to encourage the purchase of land by the peasantry, the process is too slow to meet all the requirements of the situation. Some additional expedient must be found, and we naturally look for it in the experience of older countries with a denser population.

In the more densely populated countries of Western Europe a safety-valve for the inordinate increase of the rural population has been provided by the development of manufacturing industry. High wages and the attractions of town life draw the rural population to the industrial centres, and the movement has increased to such an extent that already complaints are heard of the rural districts becoming depopulated. In Russia a similar movement is taking place on a smaller scale. During the last forty years, under the fostering influence of a protective tariff, the manufacturing industry has made gigantic strides, as we shall see in a future chapter, and it has already absorbed about two millions of the

redundant hands in the villages; but it cannot keep pace with the rapidly increasing surplus. Two millions are less than two per cent. of the population. The great mass of the people has always been, and must long continue to be, purely agricultural; and it is to their fields that they must look for the means of subsistence. If the fields do not supply enough for their support under the existing primitive methods of cultivation better methods must be adopted. To use a favourite semi-scientific phrase, Russia has now reached the point in her economic development at which she must abandon her traditional *extensive* system of agriculture and adopt a more *intensive* system. So far all competent authorities are agreed. But how is the transition, which requires technical knowledge, a spirit of enterprise, an enormous capital, and a dozen other things which the peasantry do not at present possess, to be effected? Here begin the well-marked differences of opinion.

Hitherto the momentous problem has been dealt with chiefly by the theorists and doctrinaires, who delight in radical solutions by means of panaceas, and who have little taste for detailed local investigation and gradual improvement. I do not refer to the so-called "Saviours of the Fatherland" (*Spasiteli Otétchestva*), well-meaning cranks and visionaries who discover ingenious devices for making their native country at once prosperous and happy. I speak of the great majority of reasonable, educated men who devote some attention to the problem. Their favourite method of dealing with it is this: The intensive system of agriculture requires scientific knowledge and a higher level of intellectual culture. What has to be done, therefore, is to create agricultural colleges supplied with all the newest appliances of agronomic research and to educate the peasantry to such an

extent that they may be able to use the means which science recommends.

For many years this doctrine prevailed in the Press, among the reading public, and even in the official world. The Government was accordingly urged to improve and multiply the agronomic colleges and the schools of all grades and descriptions. Learned dissertations were published on the chemical constitution of the various soils, the action of the atmosphere on the different ingredients, the necessity of making careful meteorological observations, and numerous other topics of a similar kind; and would-be reformers who had no taste for such highly technical researches could console themselves with the idea that they were advancing the vital interests of the country by discussing the relative merits of Communal and personal land tenure—deciding generally in favour of the former as more in accordance with the peculiarities of Russian, as contrasted with West-European, principles of economic and social development.

While much valuable time and energy were thus being expended to little purpose, on the assumption that the old system might be left untouched until the preparations for a radical solution had been completed, disagreeable facts which could not be entirely overlooked gradually produced in influential quarters the conviction that the question was much more urgent than was commonly supposed. A sensitive chord in the heart of the Government was struck by the steadily increasing arrears of taxation, and spasmodic attempts have since been made to cure the evil. In the local administration, too, the urgency of the question has come to be recognised, and measures are now being taken by the Zemstvo to help the peasantry in making gradually the transition to that higher

system of agriculture which is the only means of permanently saving them from starvation. For this purpose, in many districts, well-trained specialists have been appointed to study the local conditions and to recommend to the villagers such simple improvements as are within their means. These improvements may be classified under the following heads:—

(1) Increase of the cereal crops by better seed and improved implements.

(2) Change in the rotation of crops by the introduction of certain grasses and roots which improve the soil and supply food for live-stock.

(3) Improvement and increase of live-stock, so as to get more labour-power, more manure, more dairy produce, and more meat.

(4) Increased cultivation of vegetables and fruit.

With these objects in view the Zemstvo is establishing depots, in which improved implements and better seed are sold at moderate prices, and the payments are made in instalments, so that even the poorer members of the community can take advantage of the facilities offered. Bulls and stallions are kept at central points for the purpose of improving the breed of cattle and horses, and the good results are already visible. Elementary instruction in farming and gardening is being introduced into the primary schools. In some districts the exertions of the Zemstvo are supplemented by small agricultural societies, mutual credit associations, and village banks, and these are to some extent assisted by the Central Government. But the beneficent action in this direction is not all official. Many proprietors deserve great praise for the good influence which they exercise on the peasants of their neighbourhood and the assistance they give them; and it must be

admitted that their patience is often sorely tried, for the peasants have the obstinacy of ignorance, and possess other qualities which are not sympathetic. I know one excellent proprietor who began his civilising efforts by giving to the *Mir* of the nearest village an iron plough as a model and a fine pedigree ram as a producer, and who found, on returning from a tour abroad, that during his absence the plough had been sold for vodka, and the pedigree ram had been eaten before it had time to produce any descendants! In spite of this he continues his efforts, and not altogether without success.

It need hardly be said that the progress of the peasantry is not so rapid as could be wished. The muzhik is naturally conservative, and is ever inclined to regard novelties with suspicion. Even when he is half convinced of the utility of some change, he has still to think about it for a long time and talk it over again and again with his friends and neighbours, and this preparatory stage of progress may last for years. Unless he happens to be a man of unusual intelligence and energy, it is only when he sees with his own eyes that some humble individual of his own condition in life has actually gained by abandoning the old routine and taking to new courses, that he makes up his mind to take the plunge himself. Still, he is beginning to jog on. *E pur si muove!* A spirit of progress is beginning to move on the face of the long-stagnant waters, and progress once begun is pretty sure to continue with increasing rapidity. With starvation hovering in the rear, even the most conservative are not likely to stop or turn back.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ZEMSTVO AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

Necessity of Reorganising the Provincial Administration—Zemstvo created in 1864—My First Acquaintance with the Institution—District and Provincial Assemblies—The Leading Members—Great Expectations created by the Institution—These Expectations not realised—Suspicions and Hostility of the Bureaucracy—Zemstvo brought more under Control of the Centralised Administration—What it has really done—Why it has not done more—Rapid Increase of the Rates—How far the Expenditure is judicious—Why the Impoverishment of the Peasantry was neglected—Unpractical, pedantic Spirit—Evil Consequences—Chinese and Russian Formalism—Local Self-Government of Russia contrasted with that of England—Zemstvo better than its Predecessors—Its Future.

AFTER the emancipation of the serfs, the reform most urgently required was the improvement of the provincial administration. In the time of serfage the Emperor Nicholas, referring to the landed proprietors, used to say in a jocular tone that he had in his Empire 50,000 most zealous and efficient hereditary police-masters. By the Emancipation Law the authority of these hereditary police-masters was for ever abolished, and it became urgently necessary to put something else in its place. Peasant self-government was accordingly organised on the basis of the rural Commune; but it fell far short of meeting the requirements of the situation. Its largest unit was the *Vólost*, which comprises merely a few contiguous Communes, and its action is confined exclusively to the peasantry. Evidently it was necessary to create a larger administrative unit, in which the interests of all classes of the population could be attended to, and for this purpose Alexander II. in November, 1859, more than a year before the Emancipation Edict, instructed a special Commission to prepare a project

for giving to the inefficient, dislocated provincial administration greater unity and independence. The project was duly prepared, and after being discussed in the Council of State it received the Imperial sanction in January, 1864. It was supposed to give, in the words of an explanatory memorandum attached to it, "as far as possible a complete and logical development to the principle of local self-government." Thus was created the Zemstvo,* which has recently attracted considerable attention in Western Europe, and which is destined, perhaps, to play a great political part in the future.

My personal acquaintance with this interesting institution dates from 1870. Very soon after my arrival at Novgorod in that year, I made the acquaintance of a gentleman who was described to me as "the president of the provincial Zemstvo-bureau," and finding him amiable and communicative, I suggested that he might give me some information regarding the institution of which he was the chief local representative. With the utmost readiness he proposed to be my Mentor, introduced me to his colleagues, and invited me to come and see him at his office as often as I felt inclined. Of this invitation I made abundant use. At first my visits were discreetly few and short, but when I found that my new friend and his colleagues really wished to instruct me in all the details of Zemstvo administration, and had arranged a special table in the president's room for my convenience, I became a regular attendant, and spent daily several hours in the bureau, studying the current affairs, and noting down the interesting bits of statistical and other

* The term Zemstvo is derived from the word *Zemlyá*, meaning land, and might be translated, if a barbarism were permissible, by Land-dom, on the analogy of Kingdom, Dukedom, etc.

information which came before the members, as if I had been one of their number. When they went to inspect the hospital, the lunatic asylum, the seminary for the preparation of village schoolmasters, or any other Zemstvo institution, they invariably invited me to accompany them, and made no attempt to conceal from me the defects which they happened to discover.

I mention all this because it illustrates the readiness of most Russians to afford every possible facility to a foreigner who wishes seriously to study their country. They believe that they have long been misunderstood and systematically calumniated by foreigners, and they are extremely desirous that the prevalent misconceptions regarding their country should be removed. It must be said to their honour that they have little or none of that false patriotism which seeks to conceal national defects; and in judging themselves and their institutions they are inclined to be over-severe rather than unduly lenient. In the time of Nicholas I. those who desired to stand well with the Government proclaimed loudly that they lived in the happiest and best-governed country of the world, but this shallow official optimism has long since gone out of fashion. During all the years which I spent in Russia I found everywhere the utmost readiness to assist me in my investigations, and very rarely noticed that habit of "throwing dust in the eyes of foreigners" of which some writers have spoken so much.

The Zemstvo is a kind of local administration which supplements the action of the rural Communes, and takes cognisance of those higher public wants which individual Communes cannot possibly satisfy. Its principal duties are to keep the roads and bridges in proper repair, to provide means of conveyance for

the rural police and other officials, to look after primary education and sanitary affairs, to watch the state of the crops and take measures against approaching famine, and, in short, to undertake, within certain clearly defined limits, whatever seems likely to increase the material and moral well-being of the population. In form the institution is Parliamentary —that is to say, it consists of an assembly of deputies which meets regularly once a year, and of a permanent executive bureau elected by the Assembly from among its members. If the Assembly be regarded as a local Parliament, the bureau corresponds to the Cabinet. In accordance with this analogy my friend the president was sometimes jocularly termed the Prime Minister. Once every three years the deputies are elected in certain fixed proportions by the landed proprietors, the rural Communes, and the municipal corporations. Every province (*gubérniya*) and each of the districts (*uyézdi*) into which the province is subdivided has such an assembly and such a bureau.

Not long after my arrival in Novgorod I had the opportunity of being present at a District Assembly. In the ball-room of the "Club de la Noblesse" I found thirty or forty men seated round a long table covered with green cloth. Before each member lay sheets of paper for the purpose of taking notes, and before the president—the Marshal of Noblesse for the district—stood a small hand-bell, which he rang vigorously at the commencement of the proceedings and on all the occasions when he wished to obtain silence. To the right and left of the president sat the members of the executive bureau (*uprâva*), armed with piles of written and printed documents, from which they read long and tedious extracts, till the majority of the audience took to yawning and one or two of the members positively went to sleep. At the close of

each of these reports the president rang his bell—presumably for the purpose of awakening the sleepers—and inquired whether anyone had remarks to make on what had just been read. Generally someone had remarks to make, and not unfrequently a discussion ensued. When any decided difference of opinion appeared, a vote was taken by handing round a sheet of paper, or by the simpler method of requesting the Ayes to stand up and the Noes to sit still.

What surprised me most in this assembly was that it was composed partly of nobles and partly of peasants—the latter being decidedly in the majority—and that no trace of antagonism seemed to exist between the two classes. Landed proprietors and their *ci-devant* serfs, emancipated only ten years before, evidently met for the moment on a footing of equality. The discussions were carried on chiefly by the nobles, but on more than one occasion peasant members rose to speak, and their remarks, always clear, practical, and to the point, were invariably listened to with respectful attention. Instead of that violent antagonism which might have been expected, considering the constitution of the Assembly, there was too much unanimity—a fact indicating plainly that the majority of the members did not take a very deep interest in the matters presented to them.

This assembly was held in the month of September. At the beginning of December the Assembly for the Province met, and during nearly three weeks I was daily present at its deliberations. In general character and mode of procedure it resembled closely the District Assembly. Its chief peculiarities were that its members were chosen, not by the primary electors, but by the assemblies of the ten districts which compose the province, and that it took cognisance merely of those matters which concerned more than one

district. Besides this, the peasant deputies were very few in number—a fact which somewhat surprised me, because I was aware that, according to the law, the peasant members of the District Assemblies were eligible, like those of the other classes. The explanation is that the District Assemblies choose their most active members to represent them in the Provincial Assemblies, and consequently the choice generally falls on landed proprietors. To this arrangement the peasants make no objection, for attendance at the Provincial Assemblies demands a considerable pecuniary outlay, and payment of the deputies is expressly prohibited by law.

To give the reader an idea of the elements composing this assembly, let me introduce him to a few of the members. A considerable section of them may be described in a single sentence. They are commonplace men, who have spent part of their youth in the public service as officers in the army, or officials in the civil administration, and have since retired to their estates, where they gain a modest competence by farming. Some of them add to their agricultural revenues by acting as justices of the peace.* A few may be described more particularly.

You see there, for instance, that fine-looking old general in uniform, with the St. George's Cross at his button-hole—an order given only for bravery in the field. That is Prince Suvórof, a grandson of the famous general. He has filled high posts in the Administration without ever tarnishing his name by a dishonest or dishonourable action, and has spent a great part of his life at Court without ceasing to be frank, generous, and truthful. Though he has no intimate knowledge of current affairs, and sometimes

* That is no longer possible. The institution of justices elected and paid by the Zemstvo was abolished in 1889.

gives way a little to drowsiness, his sympathies in disputed points are always on the right side, and when he gets to his feet he always speaks in a clear, soldier-like fashion.

The tall gaunt man, somewhat over middle age, who sits a little to the left is Prince Vassíltchikof. He, too, has an historical name, but he cherishes above all things personal independence, and has consequently always kept aloof from the Imperial Administration and the Court. The leisure thus acquired he has devoted to study, and he has produced several valuable works on political and social science. An enthusiastic but at the same time cool-headed abolitionist at the time of the Emancipation, he has since constantly striven to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry by advocating the spread of primary education, the establishment of rural credit associations in the villages, the preservation of the Communal institutions, and numerous important reforms in the financial system. Both of these gentlemen, it is said, generously gave to their peasants more land than they were obliged to give by the Emancipation Law. In the Assembly Prince Vassíltchikof speaks frequently, and always commands attention; and in all important committees he is a leading member. Though a warm defender of the Zemstvo institutions, he thinks that their activity ought to be confined to a comparatively narrow field, and he thereby differs from some of his colleagues, who are ready to embark in hazardous, not to say fanciful, schemes for developing the natural resources of the province. His neighbour, Mr. P——, is one of the ablest and most energetic members of the Assembly. He is president of the executive bureau in one of the districts, where he has founded many primary schools and created several rural credit associations on the model of those which bear the

name of Schultze Delitsch in Germany. Mr. S——, who sits beside him, was for some years an arbiter between the proprietors and emancipated serfs, then a member of the Provincial Executive Bureau, and is now director of a bank in St. Petersburg.

To the right and left of the president—who is Marshal of Noblesse for the province—sit the members of the bureau. The gentleman who reads the long reports is my friend "the Prime Minister," who began life as a cavalry officer, and after a few years of military service retired to his estate; he is an intelligent, able administrator, and a man of considerable literary culture. His colleague, who assists him in reading the reports, is a merchant, and director of the municipal bank. The next member is also a merchant, and in some respects the most remarkable man in the room. Though born a serf, he is already, at middle age, an important personage in the Russian commercial world. Rumour says that he laid the foundation of his fortune by one day purchasing a copper cauldron in a village through which he was passing on his way to St. Petersburg, where he hoped to gain a little money by the sale of some calves. In the course of a few years he amassed an enormous fortune; but cautious people think that he is too fond of hazardous speculations, and prophesy that he will end life as poor as he began it.

All these men belong to what may be called the party of progress, which anxiously supports all proposals recognised as "liberal," and especially all measures likely to improve the condition of the peasantry. Their chief opponent is that little man with close-cropped, bullet-shaped head and small piercing eyes, who may be called the Leader of the Opposition. He condemns many of the proposed schemes, on the ground that the province is already

overtaxed, and that the expenditure ought to be reduced to the smallest possible figure. In the District Assembly he preaches this doctrine with considerable success, for there the peasantry form the majority, and he knows how to use that terse, homely language, interspersed with proverbs, which has far more influence on the rustic mind than scientific principles and logical reasoning; but here, in the Provincial Assembly, his following composes only a respectable minority, and he confines himself to a policy of obstruction.

The Zemstvo of Novgorod had at that time the reputation of being one of the most enlightened and energetic, and I must say that the proceedings were conducted in a business-like, satisfactory way. The reports were carefully considered, and each article of the annual budget was submitted to minute scrutiny and criticism. In several of the provinces which I afterwards visited I found that affairs were conducted in a very different fashion: quorums were formed with extreme difficulty, and the proceedings, when they at last commenced, were treated as mere formalities and despatched as speedily as possible. The character of the Assembly depends of course on the amount of interest taken in local public affairs. In some districts this interest is considerable; in others it is very near zero.

The birth of this new institution was hailed with enthusiasm, and produced great expectations. At that time a large section of the Russian educated classes had a simple, convenient criterion for institutions of all kinds. They assumed as a self-evident axiom that the excellence of an institution must always be in proportion to its "liberal" and democratic character. The question as to how far it might be appropriate to the existing conditions and to

the character of the people, and as to whether it might not, though admirable in itself, be too expensive for the work to be performed, was little thought of. Any organisation which rested on "the elective principle," and provided an arena for free public discussion, was sure to be well received, and these conditions were fulfilled by the Zemstvo.

The expectations excited were of various kinds. People who thought more of political than economic progress saw in the Zemstvo the basis of boundless popular liberty. Prince Vassíltchikof, for example, though naturally of a phlegmatic temperament, became for a moment enthusiastic, and penned the following words: "With a daring unparalleled in the chronicles of the world, we have entered on the career of public life." If local self-government in England had, in spite of its aristocratic character, created and preserved political liberty, as had been proved by several learned Germans, what might be expected from institutions so much more liberal and democratic? In England there had never been county parliaments, and the local administration had always been in the hands of the great landowners; whilst in Russia every district would have its elective assembly, in which the peasant would be on a level with the richest landed proprietors. People who were accustomed to think of social rather than political progress expected that they would soon see the country provided with good roads, safe bridges, numerous village schools, well-appointed hospitals, and all the other requisites of civilisation. Agriculture would become more scientific, trade and industry would be rapidly developed, and the material, intellectual, and moral condition of the peasantry would be enormously improved. The listless apathy of provincial life and the hereditary indifference to local public affairs were now, it was

thought, about to be dispelled; and in view of this change, patriotic mothers took their children to the annual assemblies in order to accustom them from their early years to take an interest in the public welfare.

It is hardly necessary to say that these inordinate expectations were not realised. From the very beginning there had been a misunderstanding regarding the character and functions of the new institutions. During the short period of universal enthusiasm for reform, the great officials had used incautiously some of the vague liberal phrases then in fashion, but they never seriously intended to confer on the child which they were bringing into the world a share in the general government of the country; and the rapid evaporation of their sentimental liberalism, which began as soon as they undertook practical reforms, made them less and less conciliatory. When the vigorous young child, therefore, showed a natural desire to go beyond the humble functions accorded to it, the stern parents proceeded to snub it and put it into its proper place. The first reprimand was administered publicly in the capital. The St. Petersburg Provincial Assembly, having shown a desire to play a political part, was promptly closed by the Minister of the Interior, and some of the members were exiled for a time to their homes in the country.

This warning produced merely a momentary effect. As the functions of the Imperial Administration and of the Zemstvo had never been clearly defined, and as each was inclined to extend the sphere of its activity, friction became frequent. The Zemstvo had the right, for example, to co-operate in the development of education, but as soon as it organised primary schools and seminaries it came into contact with the Ministry of Public Instruction. In other departments similar conflicts occurred, and the

tchinóvniks came to suspect that the Zemstvo had the ambition to play the part of a parliamentary Opposition. This suspicion found formal expression in at least one secret official document, in which the writer declares that "the Opposition has built itself firmly a nest in the Zemstvo." Now, if we mean to be just to both parties in this little family quarrel, we must admit that the Zemstvo, as I shall explain in a future chapter, had ambitions of that kind, and it would have been better perhaps for the country at the present moment if it had been able to realise them. But this is a West-European idea. In Russia there is, and can be, no such thing as "His Majesty's Opposition." To the Russian official mind the three words seem to contain a logical contradiction. Opposition to officials, even within the limits of the law, is equivalent to opposition to the Autocratic Power, of which they are the incarnate emanations; and opposition to what they consider the interests of autocracy comes within measurable distance of high treason. It was considered necessary, therefore, to curb and suppress the ambitious tendencies of the wayward child, and accordingly it was placed more and more under the tutelage of the provincial Governors.

To show how the change was effected, let me give an illustration. In the older arrangements the Governor could suspend the action of the Zemstvo only on the ground of its being illegal or *ultra vires*, and when there was an irreconcilable difference of opinion between the two parties, the question was decided judicially by the Senate; under the more recent arrangements his Excellency can interpose his veto whenever he considers that a decision, though it may be perfectly legal, is not conducive to the public good, and differences of opinion are referred, not to the Senate, but to the

Minister of the Interior, who is always naturally disposed to support the views of his subordinate.

In order to put an end to all this insubordination Count Tolstoy, the reactionary Minister of the Interior, prepared a scheme of reorganisation in accordance with his anti-liberal views, but he died before he could carry it out, and a much milder reorganisation was adopted in the law of June 12 (24), 1890. The principal changes introduced by that law were that the number of delegates in the Assemblies was reduced by about a fourth, and the relative strength of the different social classes was altered. Under the old law the Noblesse had about 42 per cent. and the peasantry about 38 per cent. of the seats; by the new electoral arrangements the former have 57 per cent. and the latter about 30. It does not necessarily follow, however, that the Assemblies are more conservative or more subservient on that account. Liberalism and insubordination are much more likely to be found among the nobles than among the peasants.

In addition to all this, as there was an apprehension in the higher official spheres of St. Petersburg that the opposition spirit of the Zemstvo might find public expression in a printed form, the provincial Governors received extensive rights of preventive censure with regard to the publication of the minutes of Zemstvo Assemblies and similar documents.

What the bureaucracy, in its zeal to defend the integrity of the Autocratic Power, feared most of all was combination for a common purpose on the part of the Zemstvos of different provinces. It vetoed, therefore, all such combinations, even for statistical purposes; and when it discovered, a few years ago, that leading members of the Zemstvo from all parts of the country were holding private meetings in Moscow for the ostensible purpose of discussing

economic questions, it ordered them to return to their homes.

Even within its proper sphere, as defined by law, the Zemstvo has not accomplished what was expected of it. The country has not been covered with a network of macadamised roads, and the bridges are by no means as safe as could be desired. Village schools and infirmaries are still far below the requirements of the population. Little or nothing has been done for the development of trade or manufactures; and the villages remain very much what they were under the old Administration. Meanwhile the local rates have been rising with alarming rapidity; and many people draw from all this the conclusion that the Zemstvo is a worthless institution which has increased the taxation without conferring any corresponding benefit on the country.

If we take as our criterion in judging the institution the exaggerated expectations at first entertained, we may feel inclined to agree with this conclusion, but this is merely tantamount to saying that the Zemstvo has performed no miracles. Russia is much poorer and much less densely populated than the more advanced nations which she takes as her model. To suppose that she could at once create for herself by means of an administrative reform all the conveniences which those more advanced nations enjoy, was as absurd as it would be to imagine that a poor man can at once construct a magnificent palace because he has received from a wealthy neighbour the necessary architectural plans. Not only years but generations must pass before Russia can assume the appearance of Germany, France, or England. The metamorphosis may be accelerated or retarded by good government, but it could not be effected at once, even if the combined wisdom of all the philosophers and states-

men in Europe were employed in legislating for the purpose.

The Zemstvo has, however, done much more than the majority of its critics admit. It fulfils tolerably well, without scandalous peculation and jobbery, its commonplace, every-day duties, and it has created a new and more equitable system of rating by which landed proprietors and house-owners are made to bear their share of the public burdens. It has done a very great deal to provide medical aid and primary education for the common people, and it has improved wonderfully the condition of the hospitals, lunatic asylums, and other benevolent institutions committed to its charge. In its efforts to aid the peasantry it has helped to improve the native breeds of horses and cattle, and it has created a system of obligatory fire-insurance, together with means for preventing and extinguishing fires in the villages—a most important matter in a country where the peasants live in wooden houses and big fires are fearfully frequent. After neglecting for a good many years the essential question as to how the peasants' means of subsistence can be increased, it has latterly, as I have mentioned in the foregoing chapter, helped them to obtain improved agricultural implements and better seed, encouraged the formation of small credit associations and savings banks, and appointed agricultural inspectors to teach them how they may introduce modest improvements within their limited means.*

* The amount expended on these objects in 1897, the latest year for which I have statistical data, was about a million and a half of roubles, or, roughly speaking, £150,000, distributed under the following heads:—

1. Agricultural tuition	£41,100
2. Experimental stations, museums, etc....	19,800
3. Scientific agriculturists	17,400
4. Agricultural industries	26,700
5. Improving breeds of horses and cattle	45,300
	£150,300

At the same time, in many districts it has endeavoured to assist the home industries which are threatened with annihilation by the big factories, and whenever measures have been proposed for the benefit of the rural population, such as the lowering of the land-redemption payments and the creation of the Peasant Land Bank, it has invariably given them its cordial support.

If you ask a zealous member of the Zemstvo why it has not done more he will probably tell you that it is because its activity has been constantly restricted and counteracted by the Government. The Assemblies were obliged to accept as presidents the Marshals of Noblesse, many of whom were men of antiquated ideas and retrograde principles. At every turn the more enlightened, more active members found themselves opposed, thwarted, and finally checkmated by the Imperial officials. When a laudable attempt was made to tax trade and industry more equitably the scheme was vetoed, and consequently the mercantile class, sure of being always taxed at a ridiculously low maximum, have lost all interest in the proceedings. Even with regard to the rating of landed and house property a low limit is imposed by the Government, because it is afraid that if the rates were raised much it would not be able to collect the heavy Imperial taxation. The uncontrolled publicity which was at first enjoyed by the Assemblies was afterwards curtailed by the bureaucracy. Under such restrictions all free, vigorous action became impossible, and the institutions failed to effect what was reasonably anticipated.

All this is true in a certain sense, but it is not the whole truth. If we examine some of the definite charges brought against the institution we shall understand better its real character.

The most common complaint made against it is that it has enormously increased the rates. On that point there is no possibility of dispute. At first its expenditure in the thirty-four provinces in which it existed was under six millions of roubles; in two years (1868) it had jumped up to fifteen millions; in 1875 it was nearly twenty-eight millions, in 1885 over forty-three millions, and at the end of the century it had attained the respectable figure of 95,800,000 roubles. As each province had the right of taxing itself, the increase varied greatly in different provinces. In Smolensk, for example, it was only about thirty per cent., whilst in Samara it was 436, and in Viatka, where the peasant element predominates, no less than 1,262 per cent.! In order to meet this increase, the rates on land rose from under ten millions in 1868 to over forty-seven millions in 1900. No wonder that the landowners who find it difficult to work their estates at a profit should complain!

Though this increase is disagreeable to the ratepayers, it does not follow that it is excessive. In all countries rates and local taxation are on the increase, and it is in the backward countries that they increase most rapidly. In France, for example the average yearly increase has been 2·7 per cent., while in Austria it has been 5·59. In Russia it ought to have been more than in Austria, whereas it has been, in the provinces with Zemstvo institutions, only about four per cent. In comparison with the Imperial taxation the local does not seem excessive when compared with other countries. In England and Prussia, for instance, the State taxation as compared with the local is as a hundred to fifty-four and fifty-one, whilst in Russia it is as a hundred to sixteen.* A reduction

* These figures are taken from the best available authorities, chiefly Schwanebach and Scalon, but I am not prepared to guarantee their accuracy.

in the taxation as a whole would certainly contribute to the material welfare of the rural population, but it is desirable that it should be made in the Imperial taxes rather than in the rates, because the latter may be regarded as something akin to productive investments, whilst the proceeds of the former are expended largely on objects which have little or nothing to do with the wants of the common people. In speaking thus I am assuming that the local expenditure is made judiciously, and this is a matter on which, I am bound to confess, there is by no means unanimity of opinion.

Hostile critics can point to facts which are, to say the least, strange and anomalous. Out of the total of its revenue the Zemstvo spends about twenty-eight per cent. under the heading of public health and benevolent institutions; and about fifteen per cent. for popular education, whilst it devotes only about six per cent. to roads and bridges, and until lately it neglected, as I have said above, the means for improving agriculture and directly increasing the income of the peasantry.

Before passing sentence with regard to these charges we must remember the circumstances in which the Zemstvo was founded and has grown up. In the early times its members were well-meaning men who had had very little experience in administration or in practical life of any sort except the old routine in which they had previously vegetated. Most of them had lived enough in the country to know how much the peasants were in need of medical assistance of the most elementary kind, and to this matter they at once turned their attention. They tried to organise a system of doctors, hospital assistants, and dispensaries by which the peasant would not have to go more than fifteen or twenty miles to get a wound dressed or to have a consultation or to obtain a simple remedy for

an ordinary ailment. They felt the necessity, too, of thoroughly reorganising the hospitals and the lunatic asylums, which were in a very unsatisfactory condition. Plainly enough, there was here good work to be done. Then there were the higher aims. In the absence of practical experience there were enthusiasms and theories. Amongst these was the enthusiasm for education, and the theory that the want of it was the chief reason why Russia had remained so far behind the nations of Western Europe. "Give us education," it was said, "and all other good things will be added thereto. Liberate the Russian people from the bonds of ignorance as you have liberated it from the bonds of serfage, and its wonderful natural capacities will then be able to create everything that is required for its material, intellectual, and moral welfare."

If there was anyone among the leaders who took a more sober, prosaic view of things he was denounced as an ignoramus and a reactionary. Willingly or unwillingly, everybody had to swim with the current. Roads and bridges were not entirely neglected, but the efforts in that direction were confined to the absolutely indispensable. For such prosaic concerns there was no enthusiasm, and it was universally recognised that in Russia the construction of good roads, as the term is understood in Western Europe, was far beyond the resources of any Administration. Of the necessity for such roads few were conscious. All that was required was to make it *possible* to get from one place to another in ordinary weather and ordinary circumstances. If a stream was too deep to be forded, a bridge had to be built or a ferry had to be established; and if the approach to a bridge was so marshy or muddy that vehicles often sank *quite* up to the axles and had to be dragged out by ropes, with the assistance of the neighbouring villagers, repairs had to be

made. Beyond this the efforts of the Zemstvo rarely went. Its road-building ambition remained within very modest bounds.

As for the impoverishment of the peasantry and the necessity of improving their system of agriculture, that question had hardly appeared above the horizon. It might have to be dealt with in the future, but there was no need for hurry. Once the rural population were educated, the question would solve itself. It was not till about the year 1885 that it was recognised to be more urgent than had been supposed, and some Zemstvos perceived that the people might starve before its preparatory education was completed. Repeated famines pushed the lesson home, and the landed proprietors found their revenues diminished by the fall in the price of grain on the European markets. Thus was raised the cry: "Agriculture in Russia is on the decline! The country has entered on an acute economic crisis! If energetic measures be not taken promptly the people will soon find themselves confronted by starvation!"

To this cry of alarm the Zemstvo was neither deaf nor indifferent. Recognising that the danger could be averted only by inducing the peasantry to adopt a more intensive system of agriculture, it directed more and more of its attention to agricultural improvements, and tried to get them adopted.* It did, in short, all it could, according to its lights and within the limits of its moderate resources. Unfortunately, its available resources were small, for it was forbidden by the Government to increase the rates, and it could not well dismiss doctors and close dispensaries and schools when the people were clamouring for more. So at least the defenders of the Zemstvo maintain, and they go so far as to contend that it did well not

* *Vide supra*, pp. 231 and 247.

to grapple with the impoverishment of the peasantry at an earlier period, when the real conditions of the problem and the means of solving it were only very imperfectly known: if it had begun at that time it would have made great blunders and spent much money to little purpose.

However this may be, it would certainly be unfair to condemn the Zemstvo for not being greatly in advance of public opinion. If it endeavours strenuously to supply all clearly recognised wants, that is all that can reasonably be expected of it. What it may be more justly reproached with is, in my opinion, that it is, to a certain extent, imbued with that unpractical, pedantic spirit which is commonly supposed to reside exclusively in the Imperial Administration. But here again it simply reflects public opinion and certain intellectual peculiarities of the educated classes. When a Russian begins to write on a simple every-day subject, he likes to connect it with general principles, philosophy, or history, and begins, perhaps, by expounding his views on the intellectual and social developments of humanity in general and of Russia in particular. If he has sufficient space at his disposal he may even tell you something about the early period of Russian history previous to the Mongol invasion before he gets to the simple matter in hand. In a previous chapter I have described the process of "shedding on a subject the light of science" in Imperial legislation.* In Zemstvo activity we often meet with pedantry of a similar kind.

If this pedantry were confined to the writing of reports it might not do much harm. Unfortunately, it often appears in the sphere of action. To illustrate this I take a recent instance from the province of Nizhni-Novgorod. The Zemstvo of that province

* *Vide supra*, pp. 26–31.

received from the central Government in 1895 a certain amount of capital for road improvement, with instructions from the Ministry of Interior that it should classify the roads according to their relative importance and improve them accordingly. Any intelligent person well acquainted with the region might have made, in the course of a week or two, the required classification accurately enough for all practical purposes. Instead of adopting this simple procedure, what does the Zemstvo do? It chooses one of the eleven districts of which the province is composed and instructs its statistical department to describe all the villages with a view of determining the amount of traffic which each will probably contribute to the general movement, and then it verifies its *à priori* conclusions by means of a detachment of specially selected "registrars," posted at all the crossways during six days of each month. These registrars doubtless inscribed every peasant-cart as it passed and made a rough estimate of the weight of its load. When this complicated and expensive procedure was completed for one district it was applied to another; but at the end of three years, before all the villages of this second district had been described and the traffic estimated, the energy of the statistical department seems to have flagged, and, like a young author impatient to see himself in print, it published a volume at the public expense which no one will ever read.

The cost entailed by this procedure is not known, but we may form some idea of the amount of time required for the whole operation. It is a simple rule-of-three sum. If it took three years for the preparatory investigation of a district and a half, how many years will be required for eleven districts? More than twenty years! During that period it

would seem that the roads are to remain as they are, and when the moment comes for improving them it will be found that, unless the province is condemned to economic stagnation, the "valuable statistical material" collected at such an expenditure of time and money is in great part antiquated and useless. The statistical department will be compelled, therefore, like another unfortunate Sisyphus, to begin the work anew, and it is difficult to see how the Zemstvo, unless it becomes a little more practical, is ever to get out of the vicious circle.

In this case the evil result of pedantry was simply unnecessary delay, and in the meantime the capital was accumulating, unless the interest was entirely swallowed up by the statistical researches; but there are cases in which the consequences are more serious. Let me take an illustration from the enlightened province of Moscow. It was observed that certain villages were particularly unhealthy, and it was pointed out by a local doctor that the inhabitants were in the habit of using for domestic purposes the water of ponds which were in a filthy condition. What was evidently wanted was good wells, and a practical man would at once have taken measures to have them dug. Not so the District Zemstvo. It at once transformed the simple fact into a "question" requiring scientific investigation. A commission was appointed to study the problem, and after much deliberation it was decided to make a geological survey in order to ascertain the depth of good water throughout the district as a preparatory step towards preparing a project which will some day be discussed in the District Assembly, and perhaps in the Assembly of the province. Whilst all this is being done according to the strict principles of bureaucratic procedure the unfortunate peasants, for whose benefit the inves-

tigation was undertaken, continue to drink the muddy water of the dirty ponds.

Incidents of that kind, which I might multiply almost to any extent, remind one of the proverbial formalism of the Chinese; but between Chinese and Russian pedantry there is an essential difference. In the Middle Kingdom the sacrifice of practical considerations proceeds from an exaggerated veneration of the wisdom of ancestors; in the Empire of the Tsars it is due to an exaggerated adoration of the goddess Naúka (Science), and a habit of appealing to abstract principles and scientific methods when only a little plain common-sense is required.

The absence of this plain common-sense sometimes becomes painfully evident during the debates of the Assemblies, and gives an air of unreality to the proceedings. On one occasion, I remember, in a District Assembly of the province of Riazán, when the subject of primary schools was being discussed, an influential member started up, and proposed that an obligatory system of education should at once be introduced throughout the whole district. Strange to say, the motion was very nearly carried, though all the members present knew — or at least might have known if they had taken the trouble to inquire— that the actual number of schools would have to be multiplied twenty-fold, and all were agreed that the local rates must not be increased. To preserve his reputation for liberalism, the honourable member further proposed that, though the system should be obligatory, no fines, punishments, or other means of compulsion should be employed. How a system could be obligatory without using some means of compulsion, he did not condescend to explain. To get out of the difficulty, one of his supporters suggested that the peasants who did not send their

children to school should be excluded from serving as office-bearers in the Communes; but this proposition merely created a laugh, for many deputies knew that the peasants would regard this supposed punishment as a valuable privilege. And whilst this discussion about the necessity of introducing an ideal system of obligatory education was being carried on, the street before the windows of the room was covered with a stratum of mud nearly two feet in depth! The other streets were in a similar condition; and a large number of the members always arrived late, because it was almost impossible to come on foot, and there was only one public conveyance in the town. Many members had, fortunately, their private conveyances, but even in these locomotion was by no means easy. One day, in the principal thoroughfare, a member had his *tarantass* overturned, and he himself was thrown into the mud!

It is hardly fair to compare the Zemstvo with the older institutions of a similar kind in Western Europe, and especially with our own local self-government. Our institutions have all grown out of real, practical wants, keenly felt by a large section of the population. Cautious and conservative in all that concerns the public welfare, we regard change as a necessary evil, and put off the evil day as long as possible, even when convinced that it must inevitably come. Thus our administrative wants are always in advance of our means of satisfying them, and we use vigorously those means as soon as they are supplied. Our method of supplying the means, too, is peculiar. Instead of making a *tabula rasa*, and beginning from the foundations, we utilise to the utmost what we happen to possess, and add merely what is absolutely indispensable. Metaphorically speaking, we repair and extend our political edifice according to the

changing necessities of our mode of life, without paying much attention to abstract principles or the contingencies of the distant future. The building may be an æsthetic monstrosity, belonging to no recognised style of architecture, and built in defiance of the principles laid down by philosophical art critics, but it is well adapted to our requirements, and every hole and corner of it is sure to be utilised.

Very different has been the political history of Russia during the last two centuries. It may be briefly described as a series of revolutions effected peaceably by the Autocratic Power. Each young energetic sovereign has attempted to inaugurate a new epoch by thoroughly remodelling the Administration according to the most approved foreign political philosophy of the time. Institutions have not been allowed to grow spontaneously out of popular wants, but have been invented by bureaucratic theorists to satisfy wants of which the people were still unconscious. The administrative machine has therefore derived little or no motive force from the people, and has always been kept in motion by the unaided energy of the central Government. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the repeated attempts of the Government to lighten the burdens of centralised administration by creating organs of local self-government should not have been very successful.

The Zemstvo, it is true, offered better chances of success than any of its predecessors. A large portion of the nobles had become alive to the necessity of improving the Administration, and the popular interest in public affairs was much greater than at any former period. Hence there was at first a period of enthusiasm, during which great preparations were made for future activity, and not a little was actually

effected. The institution had all the charm of novelty, and the members felt that the eyes of the public were upon them. For a time all went well, and the Zemstvo was so well pleased with its own activity that the satirical journals compared it to Narcissus admiring his image reflected in the pool. But when the charm of novelty had passed and the public turned its attention to other matters, the spasmodic energy evaporated, and many of the most active members looked about for more lucrative employment. Such employment was easily found, for at that time there was an unusual demand for able, energetic, educated men. Several branches of the civil service were being reorganised, and railways, banks, and joint-stock companies were being rapidly multiplied. With these the Zemstvo had great difficulty in competing. It could not, like the Imperial service, offer pensions, decorations, and prospects of promotion, nor could it pay such large salaries as the commercial and industrial enterprises. In consequence of all this, the quality of the executive bureaux deteriorated at the same time as the public interest in the institution diminished.

To be just to the Zemstvo I must add that, with all its defects and errors, it is infinitely better than the institutions which it replaced. If we compare it with previous attempts to create local self-government, we must admit that the Russians have made great progress in their political education. What its future may be I do not venture to predict. From its infancy it has had, as we have seen, the ambition to play a great political part, and at the beginning of the recent stirring times in St. Petersburg its leading representatives in conclave assembled took upon themselves to express what they considered the national demand for liberal representative institu-

tions. The desire, which had previously from time to time been expressed timidly and vaguely in loyal addresses to the Tsar, that a central Zemstvo Assembly, bearing the ancient title of Zemski Sobór, should be convoked in the capital and endowed with political functions, was now put forward by the representatives in plain unvarnished form. Whether this desire is destined to be realised, time will show.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE NEW LAW COURTS.

Judicial Procedure in the Olden Time—Defects and Abuses—Radical Reform—The New System—Justices of the Peace and Monthly Sessions—The Regular Tribunals—Court of Revision—Modification of the Original Plan—How does the System work?—Rapid Acclimatisation—The Bench——The Jury—Acquittal of Criminals who confess their Crimes—Peasants, Merchants, and Nobles as Jurymen—Independence and Political Significance of the New Courts.

AFTER serf-emancipation and local self-government, the subject which demanded most urgently the attention of reformers was the judicial organisation, which had sunk to a depth of inefficiency and corruption difficult to describe.

In early times the dispensation of justice in Russia, as in other States of a primitive type, had a thoroughly popular character. The State was still in its infancy, and the duty of defending the person, the property, and the rights of individuals lay, of necessity, chiefly on the individuals themselves. Self-help formed the basis of the judicial procedure, and the State merely assisted the individual to protect his rights and to avenge himself on those who voluntarily infringed them.

By the rapid development of the Autocratic Power all this was changed. Autocracy endeavoured to drive and regulate the social machine by its own unaided force, and regarded with suspicion and jealousy all spontaneous action in the people. The dispensation of justice was accordingly appropriated by the central authority, absorbed into the Administration, and withdrawn from public control. Themis

retired from the market-place, shut herself up in a dark room from which the contending parties and the public gaze were rigorously excluded, surrounded herself with secretaries and scribes who put the rights and claims of the litigants into whatever form they thought proper, weighed according to her own judgment the arguments presented to her by her own servants, and came forth from her seclusion merely to present a ready-made decision or to punish the accused whom she considered guilty.

This change, though perhaps to some extent necessary, was attended with very bad consequences. Freed from the control of the contending parties and of the public, the courts acted as uncontrolled human nature generally does. Injustice, extortion, bribery, and corruption assumed gigantic proportions, and against these evils the Government found no better remedy than a system of complicated formalities and ingenious checks. The judicial functionaries were hedged in by a multitude of regulations, so numerous and complicated that it seemed impossible for even the most unjust judge to swerve from the path of uprightness. Explicit, minute rules were laid down for investigating facts and weighing evidence; every scrap of evidence and every legal ground on which the decision was based were committed to writing; every act in the complicated process of coming to a decision was made the subject of a formal document, and duly entered in various registers; every document and register had to be signed and countersigned by various officials who were supposed to control each other; every decision might be carried to a higher court and made to pass a second time through the bureaucratic machine. In a word, the legislature introduced a system of formal written procedure of the most complicated kind, in the belief that by this

means mistakes and dishonesty would be rendered impossible.

It may be reasonably doubted whether this system of judicial administration can anywhere give satisfactory results. It is everywhere found by experience that in tribunals from which the healthy atmosphere of publicity is excluded justice languishes, and a great many ugly plants shoot up with wonderful vitality. Languid indifference, an indiscriminating spirit of routine, and unblushing dishonesty invariably creep in through the little chinks and crevices of the barrier raised against them, and no method of hermetically sealing these chinks and crevices has yet been invented. The attempt to close them up by increasing the formalities and multiplying the courts of appeal and revision merely adds to the tediousness of the procedure, and withdraws the whole process still more completely from public control. At the same time the absence of free discussion between the contending parties renders the task of the judge enormously difficult. If the system is to succeed at all, it must provide a body of able, intelligent, thoroughly trained jurists, and must place them beyond the reach of bribery and other forms of corruption.

In Russia neither of these conditions was fulfilled. Instead of endeavouring to create a body of well-trained jurists, the Government went further and further in the direction of letting the judges be chosen for a short period by popular election from among men who had never received a juridical education, or a fair education of any kind; whilst the place of judge was so poorly paid, and stood so low in public estimation, that the temptations to dishonesty were difficult to resist.

The practice of choosing the judges by popular election was an attempt to restore to the courts some-

thing of their old popular character; but it did not succeed for very obvious reasons. Popular election in a judicial organisation is useful only when the courts are public and the procedure simple; on the contrary, it is positively prejudicial when the procedure is in writing and extremely complicated. And so it proved in Russia. The elected judges, unprepared for their work, and liable to be changed at short intervals, rarely acquired a knowledge of law or procedure. They were for the most part poor, indolent landed proprietors, who did little more than sign the decisions prepared for them by the permanent officials. Even when a judge happened to have some legal knowledge he found small scope for its application, for he rarely, if ever, examined personally the materials out of which a decision was to be elaborated. The whole of the preliminary work, which was in reality the most important, was performed by minor officials under the direction of the secretary of the court. In criminal cases, for instance, the secretary examined the written evidence—all evidence was taken down in writing—extracted what he considered the essential points, arranged them as he thought proper, quoted the laws which ought in his opinion to be applied, put all this into a report, and read the report to the judges. Of course the judges, if they had no personal interest in the decision, accepted the secretary's view of the case. If they did not, all the preliminary work had to be done anew by themselves—a task that few judges were able, and still fewer willing, to perform. Thus the decision lay virtually in the hands of the secretary and the minor officials, and in general neither the secretary nor the minor officials were fit persons to have such power.

There is no need to detail here the ingenious expedients by which they increased their meagre

salaries, and how they generally contrived to extract money from both parties.* Suffice it to say that in general the chancelleries of the courts were dens of pettifogging rascality, and the habitual, unblushing bribery had a negative as well as a positive effect. If a person accused of some crime had no money wherewith to grease the palm of the secretary he might remain in prison for years without being brought to trial. A well-known Russian writer still living relates that when visiting a prison in the province of Nizhni-Novgorod he found among the inmates undergoing preliminary arrest two peasant women, who were accused of setting fire to a hayrick to revenge themselves on a landed proprietor, a crime for which the legal punishment was from four to eight months' imprisonment. One of them had a son of seven years of age, and the other a son of twelve, both of whom had been born in the prison, and had lived there ever since among the criminals. Such a long preliminary arrest caused no surprise or indignation among those who heard of it, because it was quite a common occurrence. Everyone knew that bribes were taken not only by the secretary and his scribes, but also by the judges, who were elected by the local Noblesse from its own ranks.

With regard to the scale of punishments, notwithstanding some humanitarian principles in the legislation, they were very severe, and corporal punishment played amongst them a disagreeably prominent part. Capital sentences were abolished as early as 1753-54, but castigation with the knout, which often ended fatally, continued until 1845, when it was replaced by flogging in the civil administration, though retained

* Old book-catalogues sometimes mention a play bearing the significant title, "The Unheard-of Wonder; or, The Honest Secretary" (*Neslýkhannoe Dyélo ili Tchestny Sekretár*). I have never seen this curious production, but I have no doubt that it referred to the peculiarities of the old judicial procedure.

for the military and for insubordinate convicts. For the non-privileged classes the knout or the lash supplemented nearly all punishments of a criminal kind. When a man was condemned, for example, to penal servitude, he received publicly from thirty to one hundred lashes, and was then branded on the forehead and cheeks with the letters K.A.T.—the first three letters of *kátorzhnik* (convict). If he appealed he received his lashes all the same, and if his appeal was rejected by the Senate he received some more castigation for having troubled unnecessarily the higher judicial authorities. For the military and insubordinate convicts there was a barbarous punishment called *Spitsruten*, to the extent of 5,000 or 6,000 blows, which often ended in the death of the unfortunate.

The use of torture in criminal investigations was formally abolished in 1801, but if we may believe the testimony of a public prosecutor, it was occasionally used in Moscow as late as 1850.

The defects and abuses of the old system were so flagrant that they became known even to the Emperor Nicholas I., and caused him momentary indignation, but he never attempted seriously to root them out. In 1844, for example, he heard of some gross abuses in a tribunal not far from the Winter Palace, and ordered an investigation. Baron Korff, to whom the investigation was entrusted, brought to light what he called "a yawning abyss of all possible horrors, which have been accumulating for years," and his Majesty, after reading the report, wrote upon it with his own hand: "Unheard-of disgrace! The carelessness of the authority immediately concerned is incredible and unpardonable. I feel ashamed and sad that such disorder could exist almost under my eyes and remain unknown to me." Unfortunately the

outburst of Imperial indignation did not last long enough to produce any desirable consequences. The only result was that one member of the tribunal was dismissed from the service, and the Governor-General of St. Petersburg had to resign, but the latter subsequently received an honorary reward, and the Emperor remarked that he was himself to blame for having kept the Governor-General so long at his post.

When His Majesty's habitual optimism happened to be troubled by incidents of this sort he probably consoled himself with remembering that he had ordered some preparatory work, by which the administration of justice might be improved, and this work was being diligently carried out in the legislative section of his own chancery by Count Bludof, one of the ablest Russian lawyers of his time. Unfortunately, the existing state of things was not thereby improved, because the preparatory work was not of the kind that was wanted. On the assumption that any evil which might exist could be removed by improving the laws, Count Bludof devoted his efforts almost entirely to codification. In reality, what was required was to change radically the organisation of the courts and the procedure, and above all to let in on their proceedings the cleansing atmosphere of publicity. This the Emperor Nicholas could not understand, and if he had understood it he could not have brought himself to adopt the appropriate remedies, because radical reform and control of officials by public opinion were his two pet bugbears.

Very different was his son and successor, Alexander II., in the first years of his reign. In his accession manifesto a prominent place was given to his desire that justice and mercy should reign in the courts of

law. Referring to these words in a later manifesto, he explained his wishes more fully as "the desire to establish in Russia expeditious, just, merciful, impartial courts of justice for all our subjects; to raise the judicial authority; to give it the proper independence, and in general to implant in the people that respect for the law which ought to be the constant guide of all and everyone from the highest to the lowest." These were not mere vain words. Peremptory orders had been given that the great work should be undertaken without delay, and when the Emancipation question was being discussed in the Provincial Committees, the Council of State examined the question of judicial reform "from the historical, the theoretical, and the practical point of view," and came to the conclusion that the existing organisation must be completely transformed.

The commission appointed to consider this important matter filed a lengthy indictment against the existing system, and pointed out no less than twenty-five radical defects. To remove these it proposed that the judicial organisation should be completely separated from all other branches of the Administration; that the most ample publicity, with trial by jury in criminal cases, should be introduced into the tribunals; that Justice of Peace Courts should be created for petty affairs; and that the procedure in the ordinary courts should be greatly simplified.

These fundamental principles were published by Imperial command on September 29th, 1862—a year and a half after the publication of the Emancipation Manifesto—and on November 20th, 1864, the new legislation founded on these principles received the Imperial sanction.

Like most institutions erected on a *tabula rasa*, the new system is at once simple and symmetrical. As a

whole, the architecture of the edifice is decidedly French, but here and there we may detect unmistakable symptoms of English influence. It is not, however, a servile copy of any older edifice; and it may be fairly said that, though every individual part has been fashioned according to a foreign model, the whole has a certain originality.

The lower part of the building in its original form was composed of two great sections, distinct from, and independent of, each other—on the one hand the Justice of Peace Courts, and on the other the Regular Tribunals. Both sections contained an Ordinary Court and a Court of Appeal. The upper part of the building, covering equally both sections, was the Senate as Supreme Court of Revision (*Cour de Cassation*).

The distinctive character of the two independent sections may be detected at a glance. The function of the Justice of Peace Courts is to decide petty cases that involve no abstruse legal principles, and to settle, if possible by conciliation, those petty conflicts and disputes which arise naturally in the relations of everyday life; the function of the Regular Tribunals is to take cognisance of those graver affairs in which the fortune or honour of individuals or families is more or less implicated, or in which the public tranquillity is seriously endangered. The two kinds of courts were organised in accordance with these intended functions. In the former the procedure is simple and conciliatory, the jurisdiction is confined to cases of little importance, and the judges were at first chosen by popular election, generally from among the local inhabitants. In the latter there is more of "the pomp and majesty of the law." The procedure is more strict and formal, the jurisdiction is unlimited with regard to the importance of the cases, and

the judges are trained jurists nominated by the Emperor.

The Justice of Peace Courts received jurisdiction over all obligations and civil injuries in which the sum at stake was not more than 500 roubles—about £50—and all criminal affairs in which the legal punishment did not exceed 300 roubles—about £30—or one year of imprisonment. When anyone had a complaint to make, he might go to the Justice of the Peace (*Mirovói Sudyá*) and explain the affair orally, or in writing, without observing any formalities; and if the complaint seemed well founded, the Justice at once fixed a day for hearing the case, and gave the other party notice to appear at the appointed time. When the time appointed arrived, the affair was discussed publicly and orally, either by the parties themselves, or by any representatives whom they might appoint. If it was a civil suit, the Justice began by proposing to the parties to terminate it at once by a compromise, and indicated what he considered a fair arrangement. Many affairs were terminated in this simple way. If, however, either of the parties refused to consent to a compromise, the matter was fully discussed, and the Justice gave a formal written decision, containing the grounds on which it was based. In criminal cases the amount of punishment was always determined by reference to a special Criminal Code.

If the sum at issue exceeded thirty roubles—about £3—or if the punishment exceeded a fine of fifteen roubles—about 30s.—or three days of arrest, an appeal might be made to the Assembly of Justices (*Mirovói Syezd*). This is a point in which English rather than French institutions were taken as a model. According to the French system, all appeals from a Juge de Paix are made to the "Tribunal d'Arrondissement," and the Justice of Peace Courts are

thereby subordinated to the Regular Tribunals. According to the English system, certain cases may be carried on appeal from the Justice of the Peace to the Quarter Sessions. This latter principle was adopted and greatly developed by the Russian legislation. The Monthly Sessions, composed of all the Justices of the District (*uyézd*), considered appeals against the decisions of the individual Justices. The procedure was simple and informal, as in the lower court, but an assistant of the Procureur was always present. This functionary gave his opinion in some civil and in all criminal cases immediately after the debate, and the Court took his opinion into consideration in framing its judgment.

In the other great section of the judicial organisation—the Regular Tribunals—there are likewise Ordinary Courts and Courts of Appeal, called respectively "Tribunaux d'Arrondissement" (*Okruzhniye Súdý*) and "Palais de Justice" (*Sudébniya Paláty*). Each Ordinary Court has jurisdiction over several Districts (*uyézdy*), and the jurisdiction of each Court of Appeal comprehends several Provinces. All civil cases are subject to appeal, however small the sum at stake may be, but criminal cases are decided *finally* by the lower court with the aid of a jury. Thus in criminal affairs the "Palais de Justice" is not at all a court of appeal, but as no regular criminal prosecution can be raised without its formal consent, it controls in some measure the action of the lower courts.

As the general reader cannot be supposed to take an interest in the details of civil procedure, I shall merely say on this subject that in both sections of the Regular Tribunals the cases are always tried by at least three judges, the sittings are public, and oral debates by officially recognised advocates form an important part of the proceedings. I venture, however,

to speak a little more at length regarding the change which has been made in the criminal procedure—a subject that is less technical and more interesting for the uninitiated.

Down to the time of the recent judicial reforms the procedure in criminal cases was secret and inquisitorial. The accused had little opportunity of defending himself, but, on the other hand, the State took endless formal precautions against condemning the innocent. The practical consequence of this system was that an innocent man might remain for years in prison until the authorities convinced themselves of his innocence, whilst a clever criminal might indefinitely postpone his condemnation.

In studying the history of criminal procedure in foreign countries, those who were entrusted with the task of preparing projects of reform found that nearly every country of Europe had experienced the evils from which Russia was suffering, and that one country after another had come to the conviction that the most efficient means of removing these evils was to replace the inquisitorial by litigious procedure, to give a fair field and no favour to the prosecutor and the accused, and allow them to fight out their battle with whatever legal weapons they might think fit. Further, it was discovered that, according to the most competent foreign authorities, it was well in this modern form of judicial combat to leave the decision to a jury of respectable citizens. The steps which Russia had to take were thus clearly marked out by the experience of other nations, and it was decided that they should be taken at once. The organs for the prosecution of supposed criminals were carefully separated from the judges on the one hand, and from the police on the other; oral discussions between the Public Prosecutor and the prisoner's counsel, together with oral examina-

tion and cross-questioning of witnesses, were introduced into the procedure; and the jury was made an essential factor in criminal trials.

When a case, whether civil or criminal, has been decided in the Regular Tribunals, there is no possibility of appeal in the strict sense of the term, but an application may be made for a revision of the case on the ground of technical informality. To use the French terms, there cannot be *appel*, but there may be *cassation*. According to the new Russian system, the sole Court of Revision is the Senate.

The Senate thus forms the regulator of the whole judicial system, but its action is merely regulative. It takes cognisance only of what is presented to it, and supplies to the machine no motive power. If any of the lower courts should work slowly or cease to work altogether, the Senate might remain ignorant of the fact, and certainly could take no official notice of it. It was considered necessary, therefore, to supplement the spontaneous vitality of the lower courts, and for this purpose was created a special centralised judicial administration, at the head of which was placed the Minister of Justice. The Minister is "Procureur-Général," and has subordinates in all the courts. The primary function of this administration is to preserve the force of the law, to detect and repair all infractions of judicial order, to defend the interests of the State and of those persons who are officially recognised as incapable of taking charge of their own affairs, and to act in criminal matters as Public Prosecutor.

Viewed as a whole, and from a little distance, this grand judicial edifice seems perfectly symmetrical, but a closer and more minute inspection brings to light unmistakable indications of a change of plan during the process of construction. Though the work

lasted only about half-a-dozen years, the style of the upper differs from the style of the lower parts, precisely as in those Gothic cathedrals which grew up slowly during the course of centuries. And there is nothing here that need surprise us, for a considerable change took place in the opinions of the official world during that short period. The reform was conceived at a time of uncritical enthusiasm for advanced liberal ideas, of boundless faith in the dictates of science, of unquestioning reliance on public spirit, public control, and public honesty—a time in which it was believed that the public would spontaneously do everything necessary for the common weal, if it were only freed from the administrative swaddling clothes in which it had been hitherto bound. Still smarting from the severe *régime* of Nicholas, men thought more about protecting the rights of the individual than about preserving public order, and under the influence of the socialistic ideas in vogue, malefactors were regarded as the unfortunate, involuntary victims of social inequality and injustice.

Towards the end of the period in question all this had begun to change. Many were beginning to perceive that liberty might easily turn to licence, that the spontaneous public energy was largely expended in empty words, and that a certain amount of hierarchical discipline was necessary in order to keep the public administration in motion. It was found, therefore, in 1864, that it was impossible to carry out to their ultimate consequences the general principles laid down and published in 1862. Even in those parts of the legislation which were actually put in force, it was found necessary to make modifications in an indirect, covert way. Of these, one may be cited by way of illustration. In 1860 criminal inquiries were taken out of the hands of the police,

and transferred to "Juges d'Instruction" (*Sudébniye Slêdovateli*), who were almost entirely independent of the Public Prosecutor, and could not be removed unless condemned for some legal transgression by a Regular Tribunal. This reform created at first much rejoicing and great expectations, because it raised a barrier against the tyranny of the police and against the arbitrary power of the higher officials. But very soon the defects of the system became apparent. Many *juges d'instruction*, feeling themselves independent and knowing that they would not be prosecuted except for some flagrantly illegal act, gave way to indolence, and spent their time in inactivity.* In such cases it was always difficult, and sometimes impossible, to procure a condemnation—for indolence must assume gigantic proportions in order to become a crime—and the minister had to adopt the practice of appointing, without Imperial confirmation, temporary *juges d'instruction* whom he could remove at pleasure.

It is unnecessary, however, to enter into these theoretical defects. The important question for the general public is: How do the institutions work in the local conditions in which they are placed?

This is a question which has an interest not only for Russians, but for all students of social science, for it tends to throw light on the difficult subject as to how far institutions may be successfully transplanted to a foreign soil. Many thinkers hold, and not without reason, that no institution can work well unless it is the natural product of previous historical development. Now we have here an opportunity of testing this theory by experience; we have even what Bacon terms an *experimentum crucis*. This new judicial system is an artificial creation constructed in accord-

* A flagrant case of this kind came under my own observation.

ance with principles laid down by foreign jurists. All that the elaborators of the project said about developing old institutions was mere talk. In reality, they made a *tabula rasa* of the existing organisation. If the introduction of public oral procedure and trial by jury was a return to ancient customs, it was a return to what had been long since forgotten by all except antiquarian specialists, and no serious attempt was made to develop what actually existed. One form, indeed, of oral procedure had been preserved in the Code, but it had fallen completely into disuse, and seems to have been overlooked by the elaborators of the new system.*

Having in general little confidence in institutions which spring ready-made from the brains of autocratic legislators, I expected to find that this new judicial organisation, which looks so well on paper, was well-nigh worthless in reality. Observation, however, has not confirmed my pessimistic expectations. On the contrary, I have found that these new institutions, though they have not yet had time to strike deep root, and are very far from being perfect even in the human sense of the term, work on the whole remarkably well, and have already conferred immense benefit on the country.

In the course of a few years the Justice of Peace Courts, which may perhaps be called the newest part of the new institutions, became thoroughly acclimatised as if they had existed for generations. As soon as they were opened they became extremely popular. In Moscow the authorities had calculated that under the new system the number of cases would be more than doubled, and that on an average each justice

* I refer to the so-called *Sūd po formê*, established by a ukaz of Peter the Great, in 1723. I was much astonished when I accidentally stumbled upon it in the Code.

would have nearly a thousand cases brought before him in the course of the year. The reality far exceeded their expectations: each justice had on an average 2,800 cases. In St. Petersburg and the other large towns the amount of work which the justices had to get through was equally great.

To understand the popularity of the Justice of Peace Courts, we must know something of the old police courts which they supplanted. The nobles, the military, and the small officials had always looked on the police with contempt, because their position secured them against interference, and the merchants acquired a similar immunity by submitting to blackmail, which often took the form of a fixed subsidy; but the lower classes in town and country stood in fear of the humblest policeman, and did not dare to complain of him to his superiors. If two workmen brought their differences before a police court, instead of getting their case decided on grounds of equity they were pretty sure to get scolded in language unfit for ears polite, or to receive still worse treatment. Even among the higher officers of the force many became famous for their brutality. A *Gorodnitchi* of the town of Tcherkassy, for example, made for himself in this respect a considerable reputation. If any humble individual ventured to offer an objection to him, he had at once recourse to his fists, and any reference to the law put him into a state of frenzy. "The town," he was wont to say on such occasions, "has been entrusted to me by his Majesty, and you dare to talk to me of the law? There is the law for you!"—the remark being accompanied with a blow. Another officer of the same type, long resident in Kief, had a somewhat different method of maintaining order. He habitually drove about the town with a Cossack escort, and when anyone of the lower classes

had the misfortune to displease him, he ordered one of his Cossacks to apply a little corporal punishment on the spot without any legal formalities.

In the Justice of Peace Courts things were conducted in a very different style. The justice, always scrupulously polite without distinction of persons, listened patiently to the complaint, tried to arrange the affairs amicably, and when his efforts failed, gave his decision at once according to law and common-sense. No attention was paid to rank or social position. A general who would not attend to the police regulations was fined like an ordinary workman, and in a dispute between a great dignitary and a man of the people the two were treated in precisely the same way. No wonder such courts became popular among the masses; and their popularity was increased when it became known that the affairs were disposed of expeditiously, without unnecessary formalities and without any bribes or blackmail. Many peasants regarded the justice as they had been wont to regard kindly proprietors of the old patriarchal type, and brought their griefs and sorrows to him in the hope that he would somehow alleviate them. Often they submitted most intimate domestic and matrimonial concerns, of which no court could possibly take cognisance, and sometimes they demanded the fulfilment of contracts which were in flagrant contradiction not only with the written law, but also with ordinary morality.*

Of course, the courts were not entirely without blemishes. In the matter, for example, of making no distinction of persons, some of the early justices, in seeking to avoid Scylla, came dangerously

* Many curious instances of this have come to my knowledge, but they are of such a kind that they cannot be quoted in a work intended for the general public.

near to Charybdis. Imagining that their mission was to eradicate the conceptions and habits which had been created and fostered by serfage, they sometimes used their authority for giving lessons in philanthropic liberalism, and took a malicious delight in wounding the susceptibilities, and occasionally even the material interests, of those whom they regarded as enemies to the good cause. In disputes between master and servant, or between employer and workmen, the justice of this type considered it his duty to resist the tyranny of capital, and was apt to forget his official character of judge in his assumed character of social reformer. Happily, these aberrations on the part of the justices are already things of the past, but they helped to bring about a reaction, as we shall see presently.

The extreme popularity of the Justice of Peace Courts did not last very long. Their history resembled that of the Zemstvo and many other new institutions in Russia—at first, enthusiasm and inordinate expectations; then consciousness of defects and practical inconveniences; and, lastly, in an influential section of the public, the pessimism of shattered illusions, accompanied by the adoption of a reactionary policy on the part of the Government. The discontent appeared first among the so-called privileged classes. To people who had all their lives enjoyed great social consideration it seemed monstrous that they should be treated exactly in the same way as the muzhik; and when a general, who was accustomed to be addressed as "Your Excellency," was accused of using abusive language to his cook, and found himself seated on the same bench with the menial, he naturally supposed that the end of all things was at hand; or perhaps a great civil official, who was accustomed to regard the police as created

merely for the lower classes, suddenly found himself, to his inexpressible astonishment, fined for a contravention of police regulations! Naturally the justices were accused of dangerous revolutionary tendencies, and when they happened to bring to light some injustices on the part of the *tchinóvniks* they were severely condemned for undermining the prestige of the Imperial authority.

For a time the accusations provoked merely a smile or a caustic remark among the Liberals, but about the middle of the Eighties criticisms began to appear even in the Liberal Press. No very grave allegations were made, but defects in the system and miscarriages of justice were put forward and severely commented upon. Occasionally it happened that a justice was indolent, or that at the Sessions in a small country town it was impossible to form a quorum on the appointed day. Overlooking the good features of the institution and the good services rendered by it, the critics began to propose partial reorganisation in the sense of greater control by the central authorities. It was suggested, for example, that the President of Sessions should be appointed by the Government, that the justices should be subordinated to the Regular Tribunals, and that the principle of election by the Zemstvo should be abolished.

These complaints were not at all unwelcome to the Government, because it had embarked on a reactionary policy, and in 1889 it suddenly granted to the critics a great deal more than they desired. In the rural districts of Central Russia the justices were replaced by the rural supervisors, of whom I have spoken in a previous chapter, and the part of their functions which could not well be entrusted to those new officials was transferred to judges of the Regular

Courts. In some of the larger towns and in the rural districts of outlying provinces the justices were preserved, but instead of being elected by the Zemstvo they were nominated by the Government.

The Regular Tribunals likewise became acclimatised in an incredibly short space of time. The first judges were not by any means profound jurists, and were too often deficient in that dispassionate calmness which we are accustomed to associate with the Bench; but they were at least honest, educated men, and generally possessed a fair knowledge of the law. Their defects were due to the fact that the demand for trained jurists far exceeded the supply, and the Government was forced to nominate men who, under ordinary circumstances, would never have thought of presenting themselves as candidates. At the beginning of 1870, in the 32 "Tribunaux d'Arrondissement" which then existed, there were 227 judges, of whom 44 had never received a juridical education. Even the presidents had not all passed through a school of law. Of course the courts could not become thoroughly effective until all the judges were men who had received a good special education, and had a practical acquaintance with judicial matters. This has now been effected, and the present generation of judges are better prepared and more capable than their predecessors. On the score of probity I have never heard any complaints.

Of all the judicial innovations, perhaps the most interesting is the jury.

At the time of the reforms the introduction of the jury into the judicial organisation awakened among the educated classes a great amount of sentimental enthusiasm. The institution had the reputation of being "liberal," and was known to be approved of by the latest authorities in criminal jurisprudence. This

was sufficient to insure it a favourable reception, and to excite most exaggerated expectations as to its beneficent influence. Ten years of experience somewhat cooled this enthusiasm, and voices might be heard declaring that the introduction of the jury was a mistake. The Russian people, it was held, was not yet ripe for such an institution, and numerous anecdotes were related in support of this opinion. One jury, for instance, was said to have returned a verdict of "*not* guilty with extenuating circumstances"; and another, being unable to come to a decision, was reported to have cast lots before an Icon, and to have given a verdict in accordance with the result! Besides this, juries often gave a verdict of "not guilty" when the accused made a full and formal confession to the court.

How far the comic anecdotes are true I do not undertake to decide, but I venture to assert that such incidents, if they really occur, are too few to form the basis of a serious indictment. The fact, however, that juries often acquit prisoners who openly confess their crime is beyond all possibility of doubt.

To most Englishmen this fact will probably seem sufficient to prove that the introduction of the institution was at least premature, but before adopting this sweeping conclusion it will be well to examine the phenomenon a little more closely in connection with Russian criminal procedure as a whole.

In England the Bench is allowed very great latitude in fixing the amount of punishment. The jury can therefore confine themselves to the question of fact and leave to the judge the appreciation of extenuating circumstances. In Russia the position of the jury is different. The Russian criminal law fixes minutely the punishment for each category of crimes, and leaves almost no latitude to the judge. The jury

know that if they give a verdict of guilty, the prisoner will inevitably be punished according to the Code. Now the Code, borrowed in great part from foreign legislation, is founded on conceptions very different from those of the Russian people, and in many cases it attaches heavy penalties to acts which the ordinary Russian is wont to regard as mere peccadilloes, or positively justifiable. Even in those matters in which the Code is in harmony with the popular morality, there are many exceptional cases in which *summum jus* is really *summa injuria*. Suppose, for instance—as actually happened in a case which came under my notice—that a fire breaks out in a village, and that the Village Elder, driven out of patience by the apathy and laziness of some of his young fellow-villagers, oversteps the limits of his authority as defined by law, and accompanies his reproaches and exhortations with a few lusty blows. Surely such a man is not guilty of a very heinous crime—certainly he is not in the opinion of the peasantry—and yet if he be prosecuted and convicted he inevitably falls into the jaws of an article of the Code which condemns to transportation for a long term of years.

In such cases what are the jury to do? In England they might safely give a verdict of guilty, and leave the judge to take into consideration all the extenuating circumstances; but in Russia they cannot act in this way, for they know that the judge must condemn the prisoner according to the Criminal Code. There remains, therefore, but one issue out of the difficulty—a verdict of acquittal; and Russian juries—to their honour be it said—generally adopt this alternative. Thus the jury, in those very cases in which it is most severely condemned, provides a corrective for the injustice of the criminal legislation. Occasionally, it is true, they go a little too far in this

direction and arrogate to themselves a right of pardon, but cases of that kind are, I believe, very rare. I know of only one well-authenticated instance. The prisoner had been proved guilty of a serious crime, but it happened to be the eve of a great religious festival, and the jury thought that in pardoning the prisoner and giving a verdict of acquittal, they would be acting as good Christians!

The legislation regards, of course, this practice as an abuse, and has tried to prevent it by concealing as far as possible from the jury the punishment that awaits the accused if he be condemned. For this purpose it forbids the counsel for the prisoner to inform the jury what punishment is prescribed by the Code for the crime in question. This ingenious device not only fails in its object, but has sometimes a directly opposite effect. Not knowing what the punishment will be, and fearing that it may be out of all proportion to the crime, the jury sometimes acquit a criminal whom they would condemn if they knew what punishment would be inflicted. And when a jury is, as it were, entrapped, and finds that the punishment is more severe than it supposed, it can take its revenge in the succeeding cases. I know at least of one instance of this kind. A jury convicted a prisoner of an offence which it regarded as very trivial, but which in reality entailed, according to the Code, seven years of penal servitude! So surprised and frightened were the jurymen by this unexpected consequence of their verdict, that they obstinately acquitted, in the face of the most convincing evidence, all the other prisoners brought before them.

The most famous case of acquittal when there was no conceivable doubt as to the guilt of the accused was that of Vera Zasulitch, who shot General Trepof, Prefect of St. Petersburg; but the circumstances

were so peculiar that they will hardly support any general conclusion. I happened to be present, and watched the proceedings closely. Vera Zasulitch, a young woman who had for some time taken part in the revolutionary movement, heard that a young revolutionist called Bogoliubof, imprisoned in St. Petersburg, had been flogged by orders of General Trepof,* and though she did not know the victim personally she determined to avenge the indignity to which he had been subjected. With this intention she appeared at the Prefecture, ostensibly for the purpose of presenting a petition, and when she found herself in the presence of the Prefect she fired a revolver at him, wounding him seriously, but not mortally. At the trial the main facts were not disputed, and yet the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty. This unexpected result was due, I believe, partly to a desire to make a little political demonstration, and partly to a strong suspicion that the prison authorities, in carrying out the Prefect's orders, had acted in summary fashion without observing the tedious formalities prescribed by the law. Certainly one of the prison officials, when under cross-examination, made on me, and on the public generally, the impression that he was prevaricating in order to shield his superiors.

At the close of the proceedings, which were dexterously conducted by counsel in such a way that, as the Emperor is reported to have said, it was not Vera Zasulitch, but General Trepof, who was being tried, an eminent Russian journalist rushed up to me in a state of intense excitement and said: "Is not this a great day for the cause of political freedom in Russia?" I could not agree with him,

* The reason alleged by General Trepof for giving these orders was that, during a visit of inspection, Bogoliubof had behaved disrespectfully towards him, and had thereby committed an infraction of prison discipline, for which the law prescribes the use of corporal punishment.

and I ventured to predict that neither of us would ever again see a political case tried publicly by jury in an ordinary court. The prediction has proved true. Since that time political offenders have been tried by special tribunals without a jury, or dealt with "by administrative procedure," that is to say, inquisitorially, without any regular trial.

The defects, real and supposed, of the present system are commonly attributed to the predominance of the peasant element in the juries; and this opinion, founded on *à priori* reasoning, seems to many too evident to require verification. The peasantry are in many respects the most ignorant class, and therefore, it is assumed, they are least capable of weighing conflicting evidence. Plain and conclusive as this reasoning seems, it is in my opinion erroneous. The peasants have, indeed, little education, but they have a large fund of plain common-sense; and experience proves—so at least I have been informed by many judges and Public Prosecutors—that, as a general rule, a peasant jury is more to be relied on than a jury drawn from the educated classes. It must be admitted, however, that a peasant jury has certain peculiarities, and it is not a little interesting to observe what those peculiarities are.

In the first place, a jury composed of peasants generally acts in a somewhat patriarchal fashion, and does not always confine its attention to the evidence and the arguments adduced at the trial. The members form their judgment as men do in the affairs of ordinary life, and are sure to be greatly influenced by any jurors who happen to be personally acquainted with the prisoner. If several of the jurors know him to be a bad character, he has little chance of being acquitted, even though the chain of evidence against him should not be quite perfect. Peasants cannot understand why

a notorious scoundrel should be allowed to escape because a little link in the evidence is wanting, or because some little judicial formality has not been duly observed. Indeed, their ideas of criminal procedure in general are extremely primitive. The Communal method of dealing with malefactors is best in accordance with their conceptions of well-regulated society. The *Mir* may, by a Communal decree and without a formal trial, have any of its unruly members transported to Siberia! This summary, informal mode of procedure seems to the peasants very satisfactory. They are at a loss to understand how a notorious culprit is allowed to "buy" an advocate to defend him, and are very insensible to the bought advocate's eloquence. To many of them, if I may trust to conversations which I have casually overheard in and around the courts, "buying an advocate" seems to be very much the same kind of operation as bribing a judge.

In the second place, the peasants, when acting as jurors, are very severe with regard to crimes against property. In this they are instigated by the simple instinct of self-defence. They are, in fact, continually at the mercy of thieves and malefactors. They live in wooden houses easily set on fire; their stables might be broken into by a child; at night the village is guarded merely by an old man, who cannot be in more than one place at a time, and in the one place he is apt to go to sleep; a police officer is rarely seen, except when a crime has actually been committed. A few clever horse-stealers may ruin many families, and a fire-raiser, in his desire to avenge himself on an enemy, may reduce a whole village to destitution. These and similar considerations tend to make the peasants very severe against theft, robbery, and arson; and a Public Prosecutor who desires to obtain a conviction against a man charged with one of these crimes

endeavours to have a jury in which the peasant class is largely represented.

With regard to fraud in its various forms, the peasants are much more lenient, probably because the line of demarcation between honest and dishonest dealing in commercial affairs is not very clearly drawn in their minds. Many, for instance, are convinced that trade cannot be successfully carried on without a little clever cheating; and hence cheating is regarded as a venial offence. If the money fraudulently acquired be restored to the owner, the crime is supposed to be completely condoned. Thus when a *Vólost* Elder appropriates the public money, and succeeds in repaying it before the case comes on for trial, he is invariably acquitted—and sometimes even re-elected!

An equal leniency is generally shown by peasants towards crimes against the person, such as assaults, cruelty, and the like. This fact is easily explained. Refined sensitiveness and a keen sympathy with physical suffering are the result of a certain amount of material well-being, together with a certain degree of intellectual and moral culture, and neither of these is yet possessed by the Russian peasantry. Anyone who has had opportunities of frequently observing the peasants must have been often astonished by their indifference to suffering, both in their own persons and in the person of others. In a drunken brawl heads may be broken and wounds inflicted without any interference on the part of the spectators. If no fatal consequences ensue, the peasant does not think it necessary that official notice should be taken of the incident, and certainly does not consider that any of the combatants should be transported to Siberia. Slight wounds heal of their own accord without any serious loss to the sufferer, and therefore the man who

inflicts them is not to be put on the same level as the criminal who reduces a family to beggary. This reasoning may, perhaps, shock people of sensitive nerves, but it undeniably contains a certain amount of plain, homely wisdom.

Of all kinds of cruelty, that which is perhaps most revolting to civilised mankind is the cruelty of the husband towards his wife; but to this crime the Russian peasant shows especial leniency. He is still influenced by the old conceptions of the husband's rights, and by that low estimate of the weaker sex which finds expression in many popular proverbs.

The peculiar moral conceptions reflected in these facts are evidently the result of external conditions, and not of any recondite ethnographical peculiarities, for they are not found among the merchants, who are nearly all of peasant origin. On the contrary, the merchants are more severe with regard to crimes against the person than with regard to crimes against property. The explanation of this is simple. The merchant has means of protecting his property, and if he should happen to suffer by theft, his fortune is not likely to be seriously affected by it. On the other hand, he has a certain sensitiveness with regard to such crimes as assault; for though he has commonly not much more intellectual and moral culture than the peasant, he is accustomed to comfort and material well-being, which naturally develop sensitiveness regarding physical pain.

Towards fraud the merchants are quite as lenient as the peasantry. This may, perhaps, seem strange, for fraudulent practices are sure in the long run to undermine trade. The Russian merchants, however, have not yet arrived at this conception, and can point to many of the richest members of their class as a proof that fraudulent practices often create enormous

fortunes. Long ago Samuel Butler justly remarked that we damn the sins we have no mind to.

As the external conditions have little or no influence on the religious conceptions of the merchants and the peasantry, the two classes are equally severe with regard to those acts which are regarded as crimes against the Deity. Hence acquittals in cases of sacrilege, blasphemy, and the like never occur unless the jury is in part composed of educated men.

In their decisions, as in their ordinary modes of thought, the jurors drawn from the educated classes are little, if at all, affected by theological conceptions, but they are sometimes influenced in a not less unfortunate way by conceptions of a different order. It may happen, for instance, that a juror who has passed through one of the higher educational establishments has his own peculiar theory about the value of evidence, or he is profoundly impressed with the idea that it is better that a thousand guilty men should escape than that one innocent man should be punished, or he is imbued with sentimental pseudo-philanthropy, or he is convinced that punishments are useless because they neither cure the delinquent nor deter others from crime; in a word, he may have in some way or other lost his mental balance in that moral chaos through which Russia is at present passing. In England, France, or Germany such an individual would have little influence on his fellow-jurymen, for in these countries there are very few people who allow new paradoxical ideas to overturn their traditional notions and obscure their common-sense; but in Russia, where even the elementary moral conceptions are singularly unstable and pliable, a man of this type may succeed in leading a jury. More than once I have heard men boast of having induced their fellow-jurymen to acquit every prisoner brought before them, not because they

believed the prisoners to be innocent or the evidence to be insufficient, but because all punishments are useless and barbarous.

One word in conclusion regarding the independence and political significance of the new courts. When the question of judicial reform was first publicly raised many people hoped that the new courts would receive complete autonomy and real independence, and would thus form a foundation for political liberty. These hopes, like so many illusions of that strange time, have not been realised. A large measure of autonomy and independence was indeed granted in theory. The law laid down the principle that no judge could be removed unless convicted of a definite crime, and that the courts should present candidates for all the vacant places on the Bench; but these and similar rights have little practical significance. If the Minister cannot depose a judge, he can deprive him of all possibility of receiving promotion, and he can easily force him in an indirect way to send in his resignation; and if the courts have still the right to present candidates for vacant places, the Minister has also this right, and can, of course, always secure the nomination of his own candidate. By the influence of that centripetal force which exists in all centralised bureaucracies, the Procureurs have become more important personages than the Presidents of the courts.

From the political point of view the question of the independence of the Courts has not yet acquired much practical importance, because the Government can always have political offenders tried by a special tribunal, or can send them to Siberia for an indefinite term of years without regular trial by the "administrative procedure" to which I have above referred.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

REVOLUTIONARY NIHILISM AND THE REACTION.

The Reform-enthusiasm becomes unpractical and culminates in Nihilism—Nihilism, the Distorted Reflection of Western Academic Socialism—Russia well prepared for Reception of Ultra-Socialist Virus—Social Reorganisation according to Latest Results of Science—Positivist Theory—Leniency of Press-censure—Chief Representatives of New Movement—Government becomes Alarmed—Repressive Measures—Reaction in the Public—The term Nihilist invented—The Nihilist and his Theory—Further Repressive Measures—Attitude of Landed Proprietors—Foundation of a Liberal Party—Liberalism checked by Polish Insurrection—Practical Reform continued—An Attempt at Regicide forms a Turning-point of Government's Policy—Change in Educational System—Decline of Nihilism.

THE rapidly increasing enthusiasm for reform did not confine itself to practical measures such as the emancipation of the serfs, the creation of local self-government, and the thorough reorganisation of the law courts and legal procedure. In the younger section of the educated classes, and especially among the students of the universities and technical colleges, it produced a feverish intellectual excitement and wild aspirations which culminated in what is commonly known as Nihilism.

In a preceding chapter I pointed out that during the last two centuries all the important intellectual movements in Western Europe have been reflected in Russia, and that these reflections have generally been what may fairly be termed exaggerated and distorted reproductions of the originals.* Roughly speaking, the Nihilist movement in Russia may be described as the exaggerated, distorted reflection of the earlier Socialist movements of the West; but it has local

* *See* Chap. XXVI.

peculiarities and local colouring which deserve attention.

The Russian educated classes had been well prepared by their past history for the reception and rapid development of the Socialist virus. For a century and a half the country had been subjected to a series of drastic changes, administrative and social, by the energetic action of the Autocratic Power, with little spontaneous co-operation on the part of the people. In a nation with such a history, Socialistic ideas naturally found favour, because all Socialist systems, until quite recent times, were founded on the assumption that political and social progress must be the result not of slow natural development, but rather of philosophic speculation, legislative wisdom, and administrative energy.

This assumption lay at the bottom of the reform enthusiasm in St. Petersburg at the commencement of Alexander II.'s reign. Russia might be radically transformed, it was thought, politically and socially, according to abstract scientific principles, in the space of a few years, and be thereby raised to the level of West-European civilisation, or even higher. The older nations had for centuries groped in darkness, or stumbled along in the faint light of practical experience, and consequently their progress had been slow and uncertain. For Russia there was no necessity to follow such devious, unexplored paths. She ought to profit by the experience of her elder sisters, and avoid the errors into which they had fallen. Nor was it difficult to ascertain what these errors were, because they had been discovered, examined and explained by the most eminent thinkers of France, Germany and England, and efficient remedies had been prescribed. Russian reformers had merely to study and apply the conclusions at which

these eminent authorities had arrived, and their task would be greatly facilitated by the fact that they could operate on virgin soil, untrammelled by the feudal traditions, religious superstitions, metaphysical conceptions, romantic illusions, aristocratic prejudices, and similar obstacles to social and political progress which existed in Western Europe.

Such was the extraordinary intellectual atmosphere in which the Russian educated classes lived during the early years of the Sixties. On "the men with aspirations" who had longed in vain for more light and more public activity under the obscurantist, repressive *régime* of the preceding reign, it had an intoxicating effect. The more excitable and sanguine amongst them now believed seriously that they had discovered a convenient short cut to national prosperity, and that for Russia a grandiose social and political millennium was at hand.*

In these circumstances it is not surprising that one of the most prominent characteristics of the time was a boundless, child-like faith in the so-called "latest results of science." Infallible science was supposed to have found the solution of all political and social problems. What a reformer had to do—and who was not a would-be reformer in those days?—was merely to study the best authorities. Their works had been long rigidly excluded by the Press-censure, and now that it was possible to obtain them, they were read with avidity.

Chief among the new, infallible prophets whose works were profoundly venerated was Auguste Comte, the inventor of Positivism. In his classification of the sciences, the crowning of the edifice

* I was not myself in St. Petersburg at that period, but on arriving a few years afterwards I became intimately acquainted with men and women who had lived through it, and who still retained much of their early enthusiasm.

was sociology, which taught how to organise human society on scientific principles. Russia had merely to adopt the principles laid down and expounded at great length in the *Cours de Philosophie Positive.* There Comte explained that humanity had to pass through three stages of intellectual development—the religious, the metaphysical, and the positive—and that the most advanced nations, after spending centuries in the two first, were entering on the third. Russia must endeavour, therefore, to get into the positive stage as quickly as possible, and there was reason to believe that, in consequence of certain ethnographical and historical peculiarities, she could make the transition more quickly than other nations. After Comte's works, the book which found, for a time, most favour was Buckle's "History of Civilisation," which seemed to reduce history and progress to a matter of statistics, and which laid down the principle that progress is always in the inverse ratio of the influence of theological conceptions. This principle was regarded as of great practical importance, and the conclusion drawn from it was that rapid national progress was certain if only the influence of religion and theology could be destroyed. Very popular, too, was John Stuart Mill, because he was "imbued with enthusiasm for humanity and female emancipation"; and in his tract on Utilitarianism he showed that morality was simply the crystallised experience of many generations as to what was most conducive to the greatest good of the greatest number. The minor prophets of the time, among whom Büchner occupied a prominent place, are too numerous to mention.

Strange to say, the newest and most advanced doctrines appeared regularly, under a very thin and transparent veil, in the St. Petersburg daily Press, and

especially in the thick monthly magazines, which were as big as, or bigger than, our venerable quarterlies. The art of writing and reading "between the lines," not altogether unknown under the Draconian *régime* of Nicholas I., was now developed to such a marvellous extent that almost anything could be written clearly enough to be understood by the initiated without calling forth the thunderbolts of the Press-censure, which was now only intermittently severe. Indeed, the Press Censors themselves were sometimes carried away by the reform enthusiasm. One of them long afterwards related to me that during "the mad time," as he called it, in the course of a single year he had received from his superiors no less than seventeen reprimands for passing objectionable articles without remark.

The movement found its warmest partisans among the students and young literary men, but not a few grey-beards were to be found among the youthful apostles. All who read the periodical literature became more or less imbued with the new spirit; but it must be presumed that many of those who discoursed most eloquently had no clear idea of what they were talking about; for even at a later date, when the novices had had time to acquaint themselves with the doctrines they professed, I often encountered the most astounding ignorance. Let me give one instance by way of illustration: A young gentleman who was in the habit of talking glibly about the necessity of scientifically reorganising human society, declared to me one day that not only sociology, but also biology should be taken into consideration. Confessing my complete ignorance of the latter science, I requested him to enlighten me by giving me an instance of a biological principle which could be applied to social regeneration. He looked confused, and tried to ride

out of the difficulty on vague general phrases; but I persistently kept him to the point, and maliciously suggested that as an alternative he might cite to me a biological principle which could *not* be used for such a purpose. Again he failed, and it became evident to all present that of biology, about which he talked so often, he knew absolutely nothing but the name! After this, I frequently employed the same pseudo-Socratic method of discussion, and very often with a similar result. Not one in fifty, perhaps, ever attempted to reduce the current hazy conceptions to a concrete form. The enthusiasm was not the less intense, however, on that account.

At first the partisans of the movement seemed desirous of assisting, rather than of opposing or undermining, the Government, and so long as they merely talked academically about scientific principles and similar vague entities, the Government felt no necessity for energetic interference; but as early as 1861 symptoms of a change in the character of the movement became apparent. A secret society of officers organised a small printing-press in the building of the Headquarters Staff and issued clandestinely three numbers of a periodical called the *Velikoruss* (*Great Russian*), which advocated administrative reform, the convocation of a constituent assembly, and the emancipation of Poland from Russian rule. A few months later (April, 1862) a seditious proclamation appeared, professing to emanate from a central revolutionary committee, and declaring that the Romanoffs must expiate with their blood the misery of the people.

These symptoms of an underground revolutionary agitation caused alarm in the official world, and repressive measures were at once adopted. Sunday schools for the working classes, reading-rooms, students' clubs, and similar institutions which might be used for

purposes of revolutionary propaganda were closed; several trials for political offences took place; the most popular of the monthly periodicals, the *Contemporary*, was suspended for a time, and its editor, Tchernishevski, arrested. There was nothing to show that Tchernishevski was implicated in any treasonable designs, but he was undoubtedly the leader of a group of youthful writers whose aspirations went far beyond the intentions of the Government, and it was thought desirable to counteract his influence by shutting him up in prison. Here he wrote and published, with the permission of the authorities and the *imprimatur* of the Press-censure, a novel called "Shto delat'?" (What is to be done?), which was regarded at first as a most harmless production, but which is now considered one of the most influential and baneful works in the whole range of Nihilist literature. As a novel it had no pretensions to artistic merit, and in ordinary times it would have attracted little or no attention, but it put into concrete shape many of the vague Socialist and Communist notions that were at the moment floating about in the intellectual atmosphere, and it came to be looked upon by the young enthusiasts as a sort of informal manifesto of their new-born faith. It was divided into two parts; in the first was described a group of students living according to the new ideas in open defiance of traditional conventionalities, and in the second was depicted a village organised on the communistic principles recommended by Fourier. The first was supposed to represent the dawn of the new era; the second, the goal to be ultimately attained. When the authorities discovered the mistake they had committed in allowing the book to be published, it was at once confiscated and withdrawn from circulation, whilst the author, after being tried by the Senate,

was exiled to North-Eastern Siberia and kept there for nearly twenty years.*

With the arrest and exile of Tchernishevski the young would-be reformers were constrained to recognise that they had no chance of carrying the Government with them in their endeavours to realise their patriotic aspirations. Police supervision over the young generation was increased, and all kinds of association, whether for mutual instruction, mutual aid, or any other purpose, were discouraged or positively forbidden. And it was not merely in the mind of the police that suspicion was aroused. In the opinion of the great majority of moderate, respectable people the young enthusiasts were becoming discredited. The violently seditious proclamations with which they were supposed to sympathise, and a series of destructive fires in St. Petersburg, erroneously attributed to them, frightened timid Liberals and gave the Reactionaries, who had hitherto remained silent, an opportunity of preaching their doctrines with telling effect. The celebrated novelist, Turgenief, long the idol of the young generation, had inadvertently, in "Fathers and Children," invented the term Nihilist, and it at once came to be applied as an opprobrious epithet, notwithstanding the efforts of Pissaref, a popular writer of remarkable talent, to prove to the

* Tchernishevski was a man of encyclopædic knowledge, and specially conversant with Political Economy. According to the testimony of those who knew him intimately, he was one of the ablest and most sympathetic men of his generation. During his exile a bold attempt was made to rescue him, and very nearly succeeded. A daring youth, disguised as an officer of gendarmes and provided with forged official papers, reached the place where he was confined and procured his release, but the officer in charge had vague suspicions, and insisted on the two travellers being escorted to the next post-station by a couple of Cossacks. The rescuer tried to get rid of the escort by means of his revolver, but he failed in the attempt, and the fugitives were arrested. In 1883 Tchernishevski was transferred to the milder climate of Astrakhan, and in 1889 he was allowed to return to his native town, Saratof, where he died a few months afterwards.

public that it ought to be regarded as a term of honour.

Pissaref's attempt at rehabilitation made no impression outside of his own small circle. According to popular opinion the Nihilists were a band of fanatical young men and women, mostly medical students, who had determined to turn the world upside down and to introduce a new kind of social order, founded on the most advanced principles of social equality and Communism. As a first step towards the great transformation they had reversed the traditional order of things in the matter of *coiffure*: the males allowed their hair to grow long, and the female adepts cut their hair short, adding occasionally the additional badge of blue spectacles. Their unkempt appearance naturally shocked the æsthetic feelings of ordinary people, but to this they were indifferent. They had raised themselves above the level of popular notions, took no account of so-called public opinion, gloried in Bohemianism, despised Philistine respectability, and rather liked to scandalise old-fashioned people imbued with antiquated prejudices.

This was the ridiculous side of the movement, but underneath the absurdities there was something serious. These young men and women, who were themselves terribly in earnest, were systematically hostile, not only to accepted conventionalities in the matter of dress, but to all manner of shams, hypocrisy, and cant in the broad Carlylean sense of those terms. To the "beautiful souls" of the older generation, who had habitually, in conversation and literature, shed pathetic tears over the defects of Russian social and political organisation without ever moving a finger to correct them—especially the landed proprietors who talked and wrote about civilisation, culture, and justice while living comfortably on the revenues

provided for them by their unfortunate serfs—they had the strongest aversion; and this naturally led them to condemn in strong language the worship of æsthetic culture. But here again they fell into exaggeration. Professing extreme utilitarianism, they explained that the humble shoemaker who practises his craft diligently is, in the true sense, a greater man than a Shakespeare or a Goethe, because humanity has more need of shoes than of dramas and poetry.

Such silly paradoxes provoked, of course, merely a smile of compassion; what alarmed the sensible, respectable "Philistine" was the method of cleansing the Augean stable recommended by these enthusiasts. Having discovered in the course of their desultory reading that most of the ills that flesh is heir to proceed directly or indirectly from uncontrolled sexual passion and the lust of gain, they proposed to seal hermetically these two great sources of crime and misery by abolishing the old-fashioned institutions of marriage and private property. When society, they argued, should be so organised that all the healthy instincts of human nature could find complete and untrammelled satisfaction, there would be no motive or inducement for committing crimes or misdemeanours. For thousands of years humanity had been sailing on a wrong tack. The great law-givers of the world, religious and civil, in their ignorance of physical science and positivist methods, had created institutions, commonly known as law and morality, which were utterly unfitted to human nature, and then the magistrate and the moralist had endeavoured to compel or persuade men and women to conform to them, but their efforts had failed most signally. In vain the police had threatened and punished, and the priests had preached and admonished. Human nature had systematically and obstinately rebelled, and still rebels, against the

unnatural constraint. It is time, therefore, to try a new system. Instead of continuing, as has been done for thousands of years, to force men and women, as it were, into badly fitting, unelastic clothes which cause intense discomfort and prevent all healthy muscular action, why not adapt the costume to the anatomy and physiology of the human frame? Then the clothes will no longer be rent, and those who wear them will be contented and happy.

Unfortunately for the progress of humanity, there are serious obstacles in the way of this radical change of system. The absurd, antiquated and pernicious institutions and customs are supported by abstruse metaphysical reasons and enshrined in mystical, romantic sentiment, and in this way they may still be preserved for generations unless the axe be laid to the root of the tree. Now is the critical moment. Russia must be made to rise at once from the metaphysical to the positivist stage of intellectual development; metaphysical reasoning and romantic sentiment must be rigorously discarded; and everything must be brought to the touchstone of naked practical utility.

One might naturally suppose that men holding such opinions must be materialists of the grossest type—and, indeed, many of them gloried in the name of materialist and atheist—but such an inference would be erroneous. While denouncing metaphysics, they were themselves metaphysicians in so far as they were constantly juggling with abstract conceptions, and letting themselves be guided in their walk and conversation by *à priori* deductions; while ridiculing romanticism, they had romantic sentiment enough to make them sacrifice their time, their property, and sometimes even their life, to the attainment of an unrealisable ideal; and while congratulating themselves on having passed from the

religious to the positivist stage of intellectual development, they frequently showed themselves animated with the spirit of the early martyrs!

Rarely have the strange inconsistencies of human nature been so strikingly exemplified as in these unpractical, anti-religious fanatics. In dealing with them I might easily, without very great exaggeration, produce a most amusing caricature, but I prefer describing them as they really were. A few years after the period here referred to I knew some of them intimately, and I must say that, without at all sharing or sympathising with their opinions, I could not help respecting them as honourable, upright, Quixotic men and women who had made great sacrifices for their convictions. One of them whom I have specially in view at this moment, suffered patiently for years from the utter shipwreck of his generous illusions, and when he could no longer hope to see the dawn of a brighter day, he ended by committing suicide. Yet that man believed himself to be a realist, a materialist, and a utilitarian of the purest water, and habitually professed a scathing contempt for every form of romantic sentiment! In reality he was one of the best and most sympathetic men I have ever known.

To return from this digression. So long as the subversive opinions were veiled in abstract language, they raised misgivings in only a comparatively small circle; but when school-teachers put them into a form suited to the juvenile mind, they were apt to produce startling effects. In a satirical novel of the time a little girl is represented as coming to her mother and saying, "Little mamma! Maria Ivan'na, our new schoolmistress, says there is no God and no Tsar, and that it is wrong to marry!" Whether such incidents actually occurred in real life, as several friends assured me, I am not prepared to say, but

certainly people believed that they might occur in their own families, and that was quite sufficient to produce alarm even in the ranks of the Liberals, to say nothing of the rapidly increasing army of the Reactionaries.

To illustrate the general uneasiness produced in St. Petersburg, I may quote here a letter written in October, 1861, by a man who occupied one of the highest positions in the Administration. As he had the reputation of being an ultra-Liberal who sympathised overmuch with Young Russia, we may assume that he did not take an exceptionally alarmist view of the situation:—

"You have not been long absent—merely a few months; but if you returned now, you would be astonished by the progress which the Opposition, one might say the Revolutionary Party, has already made. The disorders in the university do not concern merely the students. I see in the affair the beginning of serious dangers for public tranquillity and the existing order of things. Young people, without distinction of costume, uniform and origin, take part in the street demonstrations. Besides the students of the university there are the students of other institutions, and a mass of people who are students only in name. Among these last are certain gentlemen in long beards and a number of *révolutionnaires* in crinoline, who are of all the most fanatical. Blue collars—the distinguishing mark of the students' uniform—have become the *signe de ralliement*. Almost all the professors and many officers take the part of the students. The newspaper critics openly defend their colleagues. Mikhailof has been convicted of writing, printing and circulating one of the most violent proclamations that ever existed, under the heading, 'To the young generation!' Among the students and the men of letters there is unquestionably an organised conspiracy, which has perhaps leaders outside the literary circle. . . . . The police are powerless. They arrest anyone they can lay hands on. About eighty people have been already sent to the fortress and examined, but all this leads to no practical result, because the revolutionary ideas have taken possession of all classes, all ages, all professions, and are publicly expressed in the streets, in the barracks, and in the Ministries. I believe the police itself is carried away by them! What this will lead to, it is difficult to

predict. I am very much afraid of some bloody catastrophe. Even if it should not go to such a length immediately, the position of the Government will be extremely difficult. Its authority is shaken, and all are convinced that it is powerless, stupid and incapable. On that point there is the most perfect unanimity among all parties of all colours, even the most opposite. The most desperate 'planter'* agrees in that respect with the most desperate Socialist. Meanwhile, those who have the direction of affairs do almost nothing and have no plan or definite aim in view. At present the Emperor is not in the capital, and now, more than at any other time, there is complete anarchy in the absence of the master of the house. There is a great deal of bustle and talk, and all blame they know not whom." †

The expected revolution did not take place, but timid people had no difficulty in perceiving signs of its approach. The Press continued to disseminate, under a more or less disguised form, ideas which were considered dangerous. The *Kólokol*, a Russian revolutionary paper published in London by Herzen and strictly prohibited by the Press-censure, found its way in large quantities into the country, and, as is recorded in an earlier chapter, was read by thousands, including the higher officials and the Emperor himself, who found it regularly on his writing-table, laid there by some unknown hand. In St. Petersburg, the arrest of Tchernishevski and the suspension of his magazine, the *Contemporary*, made the writers a little more cautious in their mode of expression, but the spirit of their articles remained unchanged. These energetic, intolerant leaders of public opinion were *novi homines* not personally connected with the social strata in which moderate views and retrograde

* An epithet commonly applied, at the time of the Emancipation, to the partisans of serfage and the defenders of the proprietors' rights.

† I found this interesting letter (which might have been written to-day) thirty years ago among the private papers of Nicholas Milútin, who played a leading part as an official in the reforms of the time. It was first published in an article on "Secret Societies in Russia," which I contributed to the *Fortnightly Review* of 1st August, 1877.

tendencies had begun to prevail. Mostly sons of priests or of petty officials, they belonged to a recently created literary proletariat, composed of young men with boundless aspirations and meagre material resources, who earned a precarious subsistence by journalism or by giving lessons in private families. Living habitually in a world of theories and unrestrained by practical acquaintance with public life, they were ready, from the purest and most disinterested motives, to destroy ruthlessly the existing order of things in order to realise their crude notions of social regeneration. Their heated imagination showed them in the near future a New Russia, composed of independent federated Communes, without any bureaucracy or any central power—a happy land in which everybody virtuously and automatically fulfilled his public and private duties, and in which the policeman and all other embodiments of material constraint were wholly superfluous.

Governments are not easily converted to Utopian schemes of that idyllic type, and it is not surprising that even a Government with liberal humanitarian aspirations like that of Alexander II. should have become alarmed and should have attempted to stem the current. What is to be regretted is that the repressive measures adopted were a little too Oriental in their character. Scores of young students of both sexes—for the Nihilist army included a strong female contingent—were secretly arrested and confined for months in unwholesome prisons, and many of them were finally exiled, without any regular trial, to distant provinces in European Russia or to Siberia. Their exile, it is true, was not at all so terrible as is commonly supposed, because political exiles are not usually confined in prisons or compelled to labour in the mines, but are obliged merely to reside at a given

place under police supervision. Still, such punishment was severe enough for educated young men and women, especially when their lot was cast among a population composed exclusively of peasants and small shop-keepers, or of Siberian aborigines, and where there were no means of satisfying the most elementary intellectual wants. For those who had no private resources the punishment was particularly severe, because the Government granted merely a miserable monthly pittance, hardly sufficient to purchase food of the coarsest kind, and there was rarely an opportunity of adding to the meagre official allowance by intellectual or manual labour. In all cases the treatment accorded to the exiles wounded their sense of justice and increased the existing discontent among their friends and acquaintances. Instead of acting as a deterrent, the system produced a feeling of profound indignation, and ultimately transformed not a few sentimental dreamers into active conspirators.

At first there was no conspiracy or regularly organised secret society, and nothing of which the criminal law in Western Europe could have taken cognisance. Students met in each other's rooms to discuss prohibited books on political and social science, and occasionally short essays on the subjects discussed were written in a revolutionary spirit by members of the coterie. This was called mutual instruction. Between the various coteries or groups there were private personal relations, not only in the capital, but also in the provinces, so that manuscripts and printed papers could be transmitted from one group to another. From time to time the police captured these academic disquisitions, and made raids on the meetings of students who had come together merely for conversation and discussion; and the fresh arrests

caused by these incidents increased the hostility to the Government.

In the letter above quoted it is said that the revolutionary ideas had taken possession of all classes, all ages, and all professions. This may have been true with regard to St. Petersburg, but it could not have been said of the provinces. There the landed proprietors were in a very different frame of mind. They had to struggle with a multitude of urgent practical affairs which left them little time for idyllic dreaming about an imaginary millennium. Their serfs had been emancipated, and what remained to them of their estates had to be reorganised on the basis of free labour. Into the semi-chaotic state of things created by such far-reaching changes, legal and economic, they did not wish to see any more confusion introduced, and they did not at all feel that they could dispense with the Central Government and the policeman. On the contrary, the Central Government was urgently needed in order to obtain a little ready money wherewith to reorganise the estates in the new conditions, and the police organisation required to be strengthened in order to compel the emancipated serfs to fulfil their legal obligations. These men and their families were, therefore, much more conservative than the class commonly designated "the young generation," and they naturally sympathised with the "Philistines" in St. Petersburg who had been alarmed by the exaggerations of the Nihilists.

Even the landed proprietors, however, were not so entirely free from discontent and troublesome political aspirations as the Government would have desired. They had not forgotten the autocratic and bureaucratic way in which the Emancipation had been prepared, and their indignation had been only partially appeased by their being allowed to

carry out the provisions of the law without much bureaucratic interference. So much for the discontent. As for the reform aspirations, they thought that, as a compensation for having consented to the liberation of their serfs and for having been expropriated from about a half of their land, they ought to receive extensive political rights, and be admitted, like the upper classes in Western Europe, to a fair share in the government of the country. Unlike the fiery young Nihilists of St. Petersburg, they did not want to abolish or paralyse the central power; what they wanted was to co-operate with it loyally, and to give their advice on important questions by means of representative institutions. They formed a constitutional group which exists still at the present day, as we shall see in the sequel, but which has never been allowed to develop into an organised political party. Its aims were so moderate that its programme might have been used as a convenient safety-valve for the explosive forces which were steadily accumulating under the surface of Society, but it never found favour in the official world. When some of its leading members ventured to hint in the Press and in loyal addresses to the Emperor that the Government would do well to consult the country on important questions, their respectful suggestions were coldly received or bluntly rejected by the bureaucracy and the Autocratic Power.

The more the revolutionary and constitutional groups sought to strengthen their position, the more pronounced became the reactionary tendencies in the official world, and these received in 1863 an immense impetus from the Polish insurrection, with which the Nihilists and even some of the Liberals sympathised.*

* The students of the St. Petersburg University scandalised their more patriotic fellow-countrymen by making a pro-Polish demonstration.

That ill-advised attempt on the part of the Poles to recover their independence had a curious effect on Russian public opinion. Alexander II., with the warm approval of the more Liberal section of the educated classes, was in the course of creating for Poland almost complete administrative autonomy under the viceroyalty of a Russian Grand Duke; and the Emperor's brother Constantine was preparing to carry out the scheme in a generous spirit. Soon it became evident that what the Poles wanted was not administrative autonomy, but political independence, with the frontiers which existed before the first partition! Trusting to the expected assistance of the Western Powers and the secret connivance of Austria, they raised the standard of insurrection, and some trifling successes were magnified by the pro-Polish Press into important victories. As the news of the rising spread over Russia, there was a moment of hesitation. Those who had been for some years habitually extolling liberty and self-government as the normal conditions of progress, who had been sympathising warmly with every Liberal movement, whether at home or abroad, and who had put forward a voluntary federation of independent Communes as the ideal State-organism, could not well frown on the political aspirations of the Polish patriots. The Liberal sentiment of that time was so extremely philosophical and cosmopolitan that it hardly distinguished between Poles and Russians, and liberty was supposed to be the birthright of every man and woman, to whatever nationality they might happen to belong. But underneath these beautiful artificial clouds of cosmopolitan Liberal sentiment lay the volcano of national patriotism, dormant for the moment, but by no means extinct. Though the Russians are in some respects the most cosmopolitan of European nations, they are at the same time

capable of indulging in violent outbursts of patriotic fanaticism: and events in Warsaw brought into hostile contact these two contradictory elements in the national character.

The struggle was only momentary. Ere long the patriotic feelings gained the upper hand and crushed all cosmopolitan sympathy with political freedom. The *Moscow Gazette*, the first of the papers to recover its mental equilibrium, thundered against the pseudo-Liberal sentimentalism which would, if unchecked, necessarily lead to the dismemberment of the Empire: and its editor, Katkoff, became for a time the most influential private individual in the country. A few, indeed, remained true to their convictions. Herzen, for instance, wrote in the *Kólokol* a glowing panegyric on two Russian officers who had refused to fire on the insurgents; and here and there a good Orthodox Russian might be found who confessed that he was ashamed of Muravieff's extreme severity in Lithuania. But such men were few, and they were commonly regarded as traitors, especially after the ill-advised diplomatic intervention of the Western Powers. Even Herzen, by his publicly-expressed sympathy with the insurgents, lost entirely his popularity and influence among his fellow-countrymen. The great majority of the public thoroughly approved of the severe, energetic measures adopted by the Government, and when the insurrection was suppressed, men who had a few months previously spoken and written in magniloquent terms about humanitarian Liberalism joined in the ovations offered to Muravieff! At a great dinner given in his honour, that ruthless administrator of the old Muscovite type, who had systematically opposed the emancipation of the serfs and had never concealed his contempt for the Liberal ideas in fashion, could

ironically express his satisfaction at seeing around him so many "new friends"! *

This revulsion of public feeling gave the Moscow Slavophils an opportunity of again preaching their doctrine that the safety and prosperity of Russia were to be found, not in the Liberalism and Constitutionalism of Western Europe, but in patriarchal autocracy, Eastern Orthodoxy, and other peculiarities of Russian nationality. Thus the reactionary tendencies gained ground; but Alexander II., while causing all political agitation to be repressed, did not at once abandon his policy of introducing radical reforms by means of the Autocratic Power. On the contrary, he gave orders that the preparatory work for creating local self-government and reorganising the Law Courts should be pushed on energetically. The important laws for the establishment of the Zemstvo and for the great judicial reforms, which I have described in previous chapters, both date from the year 1864.

These and other reforms of a less important kind made no impression on the young irreconcilables. A small group of them, under the leadership of a certain Ishutin, formed in Moscow a small secret society, and conceived the design of assassinating the Emperor, in the hope that his son and successor, who was erroneously supposed to be imbued with ultra-Liberal ideas, might continue the work which his father had begun and had not the courage to complete. In April, 1866, the attempt on the life of the Emperor was made by a youth called Karakózof as his Majesty was leaving

* In fairness to Count Muravieff I must say that he was not quite so black as he was painted in the Polish and West-European Press. He left an interesting autobiographical fragment relating to the history of this time, but it is not likely to be printed for some years. As an historical document it is valuable, but must be used with caution by the future historian. A copy of it was for some time in my possession, but I was bound by a promise not to make extracts.

a public garden in St. Petersburg, but the bullet happily missed its mark, and the culprit was executed.

This incident formed a turning-point in the policy of the Government. Alexander II. began to fear that he had gone too far, or, at least, too quickly, in his policy of radical reform. An Imperial rescript announced that law, property, and religion were in danger, and that the Government would lean on the Noblesse and other conservative elements of Society. The two periodicals which advocated the most advanced views (*Sovreménnik* and *Rússkoye Slóvo*) were suppressed permanently, and precautions were taken to prevent the annual assemblies of the Zemstvo from giving public expression to the aspirations of the moderate Liberals.

A secret official inquiry showed that the revolutionary agitation proceeded in all cases from young men who were studying, or had recently studied, in the universities, the seminaries, or the technical schools, such as the Medical Academy and the Agricultural Institute. Plainly, therefore, the system of education was at fault. The semi-military system of the time of Nicholas had been supplanted by one in which discipline was reduced to a minimum and the study of natural science formed a prominent element. Here, it was thought, lay the chief root of the evil.

Englishmen may have some difficulty in imagining a possible connection between natural science and revolutionary agitation. To them the two things must seem wide as the poles asunder. Surely mathematics, chemistry, physiology, and similar subjects have nothing to do with politics. When a young Englishman takes to studying any branch of natural science, he gets up his subject by means of lectures, text-books, and museums or laboratories, and when he has mastered it, he probably puts his knowledge to

some practical use. In Russia it is otherwise. Few students confine themselves to their speciality. The majority of them dislike the laborious work of mastering dry details, and with the presumption which is often found in conjunction with youth and a smattering of knowledge, they aspire to become social reformers, and imagine themselves specially qualified for such activity.

But what, it may be asked, has social reform to do with natural science? I have already indicated the connection in the Russian mind. Though very few of the students of that time had ever read the voluminous works of Auguste Comte, they were all more or less imbued with the spirit of the Positive Philosophy, in which all the sciences are subsidiary to sociology, and social reorganisation is the ultimate object of scientific research. The imaginative Positivist can see with prophetic eye Humanity reorganised on strictly scientific principles. Cool-headed people who have had a little experience of the world, if they ever indulge in such delightful dreams, recognise clearly that this ultimate goal of human intellectual activity, if it is ever to be reached, is still a long way off in the misty distance of the future; but the would-be social reformers among the Russian students of the Sixties were too young, too inexperienced, and too presumptuously self-confident to recognise this plain, simple truth. They felt that too much valuable time had been already lost, and they were madly impatient to begin the great work without further delay. As soon as they had acquired a smattering of chemistry, physiology, and biology, they imagined themselves capable of reorganising human society from top to bottom, and when they had acquired this conviction they were of course unfitted for the patient, plodding study of details.

To remedy these evils, Count Dimitri Tolstoy, who was regarded as a pillar of Conservatism, was appointed Minister of Public Instruction, with the mission of protecting the young generation against pernicious ideas, and eradicating from the schools, colleges, and universities all revolutionary tendencies. He determined to introduce more discipline into all the educational establishments, and to supplant to a certain extent the superficial study of natural science by the thorough study of the classics—that is to say, Latin and Greek. This scheme, which became known before it was actually put into execution, produced a storm of discontent in the young generation. Discipline at that time was regarded as an antiquated and useless remnant of patriarchal tyranny, and young men who were impatient to take part in social reorganisation resented being treated as naughty schoolboys. To them it seemed that the Latin grammar was an ingenious instrument for stultifying youthful intelligence, destroying intellectual development, and checking political progress. Ingenious speculations about the possible organisation of the working classes and grandiose views of the future of humanity are so much more interesting and agreeable than the rules of Latin syntax and the Greek irregular verbs!

Count Tolstoy could congratulate himself on the efficacy of his administration, for from the time of his appointment there was a lull in the political excitement. During three or four years there was only one political trial, and that an insignificant one; whereas there had been twenty between 1861 and 1864, and all more or less important. I am not at all sure, however, that the educational reform, which created much momentary irritation and discontent, had anything to do with the improvement in the

situation. In any case, there were other and more potent causes at work. The excitement was too intense to be long-lived, and the fashionable theories too fanciful to stand the wear and tear of everyday life. They evaporated, therefore, with amazing rapidity when the leaders of the movement had disappeared—Tchernishevski and others by exile, and Dobrolubof and Pissaref by death—and when among the less prominent representatives of the young generation many succumbed to the sobering influences of time and experience or drifted into lucrative professions. Besides this, the reactionary currents were making themselves felt, especially since the attempt on the life of the Emperor. So long as these had been confined to the official world they had not much affected the literature, except externally through the Press-censure, but when they permeated the reading public their influence was much stronger. Whatever the cause, there is no doubt that, in the last years of the Sixties, there was a subsidence of excitement and enthusiasm, and the peculiar intellectual phenomenon which had been nicknamed Nihilism was supposed to be a thing of the past. In reality, the movement of which Nihilism was a prominent manifestation had merely lost something of its academic character, and was entering on a new stage of development.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SOCIALIST PROPAGANDA, REVOLUTIONARY AGITATION, AND TERRORISM.

Closer Relations with Western Socialism—Attempts to Influence the Masses—Bakunin and Lavroff—"Going in among the People"—The Missionaries of Revolutionary Socialism—Distinction between Propaganda and Agitation—Revolutionary Pamphlets for the Common People—Aims and Motives of the Propagandists—Failure of Propaganda—Energetic Repression—Fruitless Attempts at Agitation—Proposal to combine with Liberals—Genesis of Terrorism—My Personal Relations with the Revolutionists—Shadowers and Shadowed—A Series of Terrorist Crimes—A Revolutionist Congress—Unsuccessful Attempts to assassinate the Tsar—Ineffectual Attempt at Conciliation by Loris Melikof—Assassination of Alexander II.—The Executive Committee shows itself unpractical—Widespread Indignation and Severe Repression—Temporary Collapse of the Revolutionary Movement—A New Revolutionary Movement in Sight.

COUNT TOLSTOY'S educational reform had one effect which was not anticipated: it brought the revolutionists into closer contact with Western Socialism. Many students, finding their position in Russia uncomfortable, determined to go abroad and continue their studies in foreign universities, where they would be free from the inconveniences of police supervision and Press-censure. Those of the female sex had an additional motive to emigrate because they could not complete their studies in Russia, but they had more difficulty in carrying out their intention, because parents naturally disliked the idea of their daughters going abroad to lead a Bohemian life, and they very often obstinately refused to give their consent. In such cases the persistent daughter found herself in a dilemma. Though she might run away from her family and possibly earn her own living, she could not cross the frontier without a passport; and without

the parental sanction a passport could not be obtained. Of course she might marry and get the consent of her husband, but most of these young ladies objected to the trammels of matrimony. Occasionally the problem was solved by means of a fictitious marriage, and when a young man could not be found to co-operate voluntarily in the arrangement, the terrorist methods which the revolutionists adopted a few years later for other purposes might be employed. I have heard of at least one case in which an ardent female devotee of medical science threatened to shoot a student who was going abroad if he did not submit to the matrimonial ceremony and allow her to accompany him to the frontier as his official wife!

Strange as this story may seem, it contains nothing inherently improbable. At that time the energetic young ladies of the Nihilist school were not to be diverted from their purposes by trifling obstacles. We shall meet some of them hereafter, displaying great courage and tenacity in revolutionary activity. One of them, for example, attempted to murder the Prefect of St. Petersburg, and another, a young person of considerable refinement and great personal charm, gave the signal for the assassination of Alexander II., and expiated her crime on the scaffold without the least sign of repentance.

Most of the studious *émigrés* of both sexes went to Zürich, where female students were admitted to the medical classes. Here they made the acquaintance of noted Socialists from various countries who had settled in Switzerland, and being in search of panaceas for social regeneration, they naturally fell under their influence. At the same time they read with avidity the works of Proudhon, Lassalle, Büchner, Marx, Flerovski, Pfeiffer and other writers of "advanced" opinions.

Among the apostles of Socialism living at that time in Switzerland, they found a sympathetic fellow-countryman in the famous Anarchist Bakunin, who had succeeded in escaping from Siberia. His ideal was the immediate overthrow of all existing Governments, the destruction of all administrative organisation, the abolition of all *bourgeois* institutions, and the establishment of an entirely new order of things on the basis of a free federation of productive Communes, in which all the land should be distributed among those capable of tilling it and the instruments of production confided to co-operative associations. Efforts to obtain mere political reforms, even of the most radical type, were regarded by him with contempt as miserable palliatives, which could be of no real, permanent benefit to the masses, and might be positively injurious by prolonging the present era of *bourgeois* domination.

For the dissemination of these principles a special organ called *The Cause of the People* (*Narodnoye Dyelo*) was founded in Geneva in 1868 and was smuggled across the Russian frontier in considerable quantities. It aimed at drawing away the young generation from Academic Nihilism to more practical revolutionary activity, but it evidently remained to some extent under the old influences, for it indulged occasionally in very abstract philosophical disquisitions. In its first number, for example, it published a programme in which the editors thought it necessary to declare that they were materialists and atheists, because the belief in God and a future life, as well as every other kind of idealism, demoralises the people, inspiring it with mutually contradictory aspirations, and thereby depriving it of the energy necessary for the conquest of its natural rights in this world, and the complete organisation of a free

and happy life. At the end of two years this organ for moralising the people collapsed from want of funds, but other periodicals and pamphlets were printed, and the clandestine relations between the exiles in Switzerland and their friends in St. Petersburg were maintained without difficulty, notwithstanding the efforts of the police to cut the connection. In this way Young Russia became more and more saturated with the extreme Socialist theories current in Western Europe.

Thanks partly to this foreign influence and partly to their own practical experience the would-be reformers who remained at home came to understand that academic talking and discussing could bring about no serious results. Students alone, however numerous and however devoted to the cause, could not hope to overthrow or coerce the Government. It was childish to suppose that the walls of the autocratic Jericho would fall at the blasts of academic trumpets. Attempts at revolution could not be successful without the active support of the people, and consequently the revolutionary agitation must be extended to the masses.

So far there was complete agreement among the revolutionists, but with regard to the *modus operandi* emphatic differences of opinion appeared. Those who were carried away by the stirring accents of Bakunin imagined that if the masses could only be made to feel themselves the victims of administrative and economic oppression, they would rise and free themselves by a united effort. According to this view all that was required was that popular discontent should be excited and that precautions should be taken to ensure that the explosions of discontent should take place simultaneously all over the country. The rest might safely be left, it was thought, to the operation of natural

forces and the inspiration of the moment. Against this dangerous illusion warning voices were raised. Lavroff, for example, while agreeing with Bakunin that mere political reforms were of little or no value, and that any genuine improvement in the condition of the working classes could proceed only from economic and social reorganisation, maintained stoutly that the revolution, to be permanent and beneficial, must be accomplished, not by demagogues directing the ignorant masses, but by the people as a whole, *after it had been enlightened and instructed as to its true interests.* The preparatory work would necessarily require a whole generation of educated propagandists, living among the labouring population, rural and urban.

For some time there was a conflict between these two currents of opinion, but the views of Lavroff, which were simply a practical development of academic Nihilism, gained far more adherents than the violent anarchical proposals of Bakunin, and finally the grandiose scheme of realising gradually the Socialist ideal by indoctrinating the masses was adopted with enthusiasm. In St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other large towns, the student associations for mutual instruction, to which I have referred in the foregoing chapter, became centres of popular propaganda, and the academic Nihilists were transformed into active missionaries. Scores of male and female students, impatient to convert the masses to the gospel of freedom and terrestrial felicity, sought to get into touch with the common people by settling in the villages as school-teachers, medical practitioners, midwives, etc., or by working as common factory hands in the industrial centres. In order to obtain employment in the factories and conceal their real purpose, they procured false passports, in which they were described as belonging to

the lower classes; and even those who settled in the villages lived generally under assumed names. Thus was formed a class of professional revolutionists, sometimes called the Illegals, who were liable to be arrested at any moment by the police. As compensation for the privations and hardships which they had to endure, they had the consolation of believing that they were advancing the good cause. The means they usually employed for making converts were informal conversations and pamphlets expressly written for the purpose. The more enthusiastic and persevering of these missionaries would continue their efforts for months and years, remaining in communication with the headquarters in the capital or some provincial town in order to report progress, obtain a fresh supply of pamphlets, and get their forged passports renewed.

This extraordinary movement was called "going in among the people," and it spread among the young generation like an epidemic. In 1873 it was suddenly reinforced by a detachment of fresh recruits. Over a hundred Russian students were recalled by the Government from Switzerland, in order to save them from the baneful influence of Bakunin, Lavroff, and other noted Socialists, and a large proportion of them joined the ranks of the propagandists.*

With regard to the aims and methods of the propagandists, a good deal of information was obtained in the course of a judicial inquiry instituted in 1875. A peasant, who was at the same time a factory worker, informed the police that certain persons were distributing revolutionary pamphlets among the factory hands, and as a proof of what he said he produced some pamphlets which he had himself

* Instances of "going in among the people" had happened as early as 1864, but they did not become frequent till after 1870.

received. This led to an investigation, which showed that a number of young men and women, evidently belonging to the educated classes, were disseminating revolutionary ideas by means of pamphlets and conversation. Arrests followed, and it was soon discovered that these agitators belonged to a large secret association, which had its centre in Moscow, and local branches in Ivanovo, Tula, and Kief. In Ivanovo, for instance—a manufacturing town about a hundred miles to the north-east of Moscow—the police found a small apartment inhabited by three young men and four young women, all of whom, though belonging by birth to the educated classes, had the appearance of ordinary factory workers, prepared their own food, did with their own hands all the domestic work, and sought to avoid everything which could distinguish them from the labouring population. In the apartment were found 240 copies of revolutionary pamphlets, a considerable sum of money, a large amount of correspondence in cypher, and several forged passports.

How many persons the society contained it is impossible to say, because a large proportion of them eluded the vigilance of the police; but many were arrested, and ultimately forty-seven were condemned. Of these, eleven were nobles, seven were sons of parish priests, and the remainder belonged to the lower classes — that is to say, the small officials, burghers, and peasants. The average age of the prisoners was twenty-four, the oldest being thirty-six and the youngest under seventeen! Only five or six were over twenty-five, and none of these were ringleaders. The female element was represented by no less than fifteen young persons, whose ages were on an average under twenty-two. Two of these, to judge by their photographs, were of refined,

prepossessing appearance, and seemingly little fitted for taking part in wholesale massacres such as the society talked of organising.

The character and aims of the society were clearly depicted in the documentary and oral evidence produced at the trial. According to the fundamental principles, there should exist among the members absolute equality, complete mutual responsibility and full frankness and confidence with regard to the affairs of the association. Among the conditions of admission we find that the candidate should devote himself entirely to revolutionary activity; that he should be ready to sever all ties, whether of friendship or of love, for the good cause; that he should possess great powers of self-sacrifice and the capacity for keeping secrets; and that he should consent to become, when necessary, a common labourer in a factory. The desire to maintain absolute equality is well illustrated by the article of the statutes regarding the administration: the office-bearers are not to be chosen by election, but all members are to be office-bearers in turn, and the term of office must not exceed one month!

The avowed aim of the society was to destroy the existing social order, and to replace it by one in which there should be no private property and no distinctions of class or wealth; or, as it is expressed in one document, "to found on the ruins of the present social organisation the Empire of the working classes." The means to be employed were indicated in a general way, but each member was to adapt himself to circumstances, and was to devote all his energies to forwarding the cause of the revolution. For the guidance of the inexperienced, the following means were recommended: simple conversations, dissemination of pamphlets, the exciting of discontent, the

formation of organised groups, the creation of funds and libraries. These, taken together, constitute, in the terminology of revolutionary science, "propaganda," and in addition to it there should be "agitation." The technical distinction between these two processes is that propaganda has a purely preparatory character, and aims merely at enlightening the masses regarding the true nature of the revolutionary cause, whereas agitation aims at exciting an individual or a group to acts which are considered, in the existing *régime*, as illegal. In time of peace "pure agitation" was to be carried on by means of organised bands which should frighten the Government and the privileged classes, draw away the attention of the authorities from less overt kinds of revolutionary action, raise the spirit of the people and thereby render it more accessible to revolutionary ideas, obtain pecuniary means for further activity, and liberate political prisoners. In time of insurrection the members should give to all movements every assistance in their power, and impress on them a Socialistic character. The central administration and the local branches should establish relations with publishers, and take steps to secure a regular supply of prohibited books from abroad. Such are a few characteristic extracts from a document which might fairly be called a treatise on revolutionology.

As a specimen of the revolutionary pamphlets circulated by the propagandists and agitators I may give here a brief account of one which is well known to the political police. It is entitled *Khítraya Mekhánika* (Cunning Machinery), and gives a graphic picture of the ideas and methods employed. The *mise en scène* is extremely simple. Two peasants, Stepán and Andréi are represented as meeting in a gin-shop and drinking together. Stepán is described as

good and kindly when he has to do with men of his own class, but very sharp-tongued when speaking with a foreman or manager. Always ready with an answer, he can on occasions silence even an official! He has travelled all over the Empire, has associated with all sorts and conditions of men, sees everything most clearly, and is, in short, a very remarkable man. One of his excellent qualities is that, being "enlightened" himself, he is always ready to enlighten others, and he now finds an opportunity of displaying his powers.

When Andréi, who is still unenlightened, proposes that they should drink another glass of vodka, he replies that the Tsar, together with the nobles and traders, bars the way to his throat. As his companion does not understand this metaphorical language, he explains that if there were no Tsars, nobles, or traders, he could get five glasses of vodka for the sum that he now pays for one glass. This naturally suggests wider topics, and Stepán gives something like a lecture. The common people, he explains, pay by far the greater part of the taxation, and at the same time do all the work; they plough the fields, build the houses and churches, work in the mills and factories, and in return they are systematically robbed and beaten. And what is done with all the money that is taken from them? First of all, the Tsar gets nine millions of roubles—enough to feed half a province—and with that sum he amuses himself, has hunting-parties, feasts, eats, drinks, makes merry, and lives in stone houses. He gave liberty, it is true, to the peasants; but we know what the Emancipation really was. The best land was taken away and the taxes were increased, lest the muzhik should get fat and lazy. The Tsar is himself the richest landed proprietor and manufacturer in the

country. He not only robs us as much as he pleases, but he has sold into slavery (by forming a national debt) our children and grandchildren. He takes our sons as soldiers, shuts them up in barracks so that they should not see their brother-peasants, and hardens their hearts so that they become wild beasts, ready to rend their parents. The nobles and traders likewise rob the poor peasants. In short, all the upper classes have invented a bit of cunning machinery by which the muzhik is made to pay for their pleasures and luxuries.

The people, however, will one day rise and break this machinery to pieces. When that day comes they must break every part of it, for if one bit escapes destruction, all the other parts of it will immediately grow up again. All the force is on the side of the peasants, if they only knew how to use it. Knowledge will come in time. They will then destroy this machine, and perceive that the only real remedy for all social evils is brotherhood. People should live like brothers, having no *mine* and *thine*, but all things in common. When we have created brotherhood, there will be no riches and no thieves, but right and righteousness without end. In conclusion, Stepán addresses a word to "the torturers": "When the people rise, the Tsar will send troops against us, and the nobles and capitalists will stake their last rouble on the result. If they do not succeed, they must not expect any quarter from us. They may conquer us once or twice, but we shall at last get our own, for there is no power that can withstand the whole people. Then we shall cleanse the country of our persecutors, and establish a brotherhood in which there will be no *mine* and *thine*, but all will work for the common weal. We shall construct no cunning machinery, but shall pluck up evil by the roots, and establish eternal justice!"

The above-mentioned distinction between Propaganda and Agitation, which plays a considerable part in revolutionary literature, had at that time more theoretical than practical importance. The great majority of those who took an active part in the movement confined their efforts to indoctrinating the masses with Socialistic and subversive ideas, and sometimes their methods were rather childish. As an illustration I may cite an amusing incident related by one of the boldest and most tenacious of the revolutionists, who subsequently acquired a certain sense of humour. He and a friend were walking one day on a country road, when they were overtaken by a peasant in his cart. Ever anxious to sow the good seed, they at once entered into conversation with the rustic, telling him that he ought not to pay his taxes, because the *tchinóvniks* robbed the people, and trying to convince him by quotations from Scripture that he ought to resist the authorities. The prudent muzhik whipped up his horse and tried to get out of hearing, but the two zealots ran after him and continued the sermon till they were completely out of breath. Other propagandists were more practical, and preached a species of agrarian Socialism which the rural population could understand. At the time of the Emancipation, the peasants were convinced, as I have mentioned in a previous chapter, that the Tsar meant to give them all the land, and to compensate the landed proprietors by salaries. Even when the law was read and explained to them, they clung obstinately to their old convictions, and confidently expected that the *real* emancipation would be proclaimed shortly. Taking advantage of this state of things, the propagandists to whom I refer confirmed the peasants in their error, and sought in this way to sow discontent against the proprietors and the

Government. Their watchward was "Land and Liberty," and they formed for a good many years a distinct group, under that title (*Zemlya i Volya*, or more briefly *Zemlevoltsi*).

In the St. Petersburg group, which aspired to direct and control this movement, there were one or two men who held different views as to the real object of propaganda and agitation. One of these, Prince Krapotkin, has told the world what his object was at that time. He hoped that the Government would be frightened and that the Autocratic Power, as in France on the eve of the Revolution, would seek support in the landed proprietors, and call together a National Assembly. Thus a constitution would be granted, and though the first Assembly might be conservative in spirit, autocracy would be compelled in the long run to yield to parliamentary pressure.

No such elaborate projects were entertained, I believe, by the majority of the propagandists. Their reasoning was much simpler: "The Government, having become reactionary, tries to prevent us from enlightening the people; we will do it in spite of the Government!" The dangers to which they exposed themselves only confirmed them in their resolution. Though they honestly believed themselves to be realists and materialists they were at heart romantic idealists, panting to do something heroic. They had been taught by the apostles whom they venerated, from Belinski downwards, that the man who simply talks about the good of the people, and does nothing to promote it, is among the most contemptible of human beings. No such reproach must be addressed to them. If the Government opposed and threatened, that was no excuse for inactivity. They must be up and doing. "Forward! forward! Let us plunge

into the people, identify ourselves with them, and work for their benefit! Suffering is in store for us, but we must endure it with fortitude!" The type which Tchernishevski had depicted in his famous novel, under the name of Rakhmétof—the youth who led an ascetic life and subjected himself to privation and suffering as a preparation for future revolutionary activity—now appeared in the flesh. If we may credit Bakunin, these Rakhmétofs had not even the consolation of believing in the possibility of a revolution, but as they could not and would not remain passive spectators of the misfortunes of the people, they resolved to go in among the masses, in order to share with them fraternally their sufferings, and at the same time to teach and prepare, not theoretically, but practically, by their living example.* This is, I believe, an exaggeration. The propagandists were, for the most part of incredibly sanguine temperament.

The success of the propaganda and agitation was not at all in proportion to the numbers and enthusiasm of those who took part in it. Most of these displayed more zeal than mother-wit and discretion. Their Socialism was too abstract and scientific to be understood by rustics, and when they succeeded in making themselves intelligible they awakened in their hearers more suspicion than sympathy. The muzhik is a very matter-of-fact practical person, totally incapable of understanding what Americans call "highfiluting" tendencies in speech and conduct, and as he listened to the preaching of the new gospel, doubts and questionings spontaneously rose in his mind: "What do those young people, who betray their gentle-folk origin by their delicate white hands, their foreign phrases, their ignorance of the common things of

* Bakunin: Gosudarstvennost' i Anarkhiya (State-organisation and Anarchy). Zürich 1873.

every-day peasant life, really want? Why are they bearing hardships and taking so much trouble? They tell us it is for our good, but we are not such fools and simpletons as they take us for. They are not doing it all for nothing. What do they expect from us in return? Whatever it is, they are evidently evil-doers, and perhaps *moshenniki* (swindlers). Devil take them!" and thereupon the cautious muzhik turns his back upon his disinterested self-sacrificing teachers, or goes quietly and denounces them to the police! It is not only in Spain that we encounter Don Quixotes and Sancho Panzas!

Occasionally a worse fate befell the missionaries. If they allowed themselves, as they sometimes did, to "blaspheme" against religion or the Tsar, they ran the risk of being maltreated on the spot. I have heard of one case in which the punishment for blasphemy was applied by sturdy peasant matrons. Even when they escaped such mishaps they had not much reason to congratulate themselves on their success. After three years of arduous labour the hundreds of apostles could not boast of more than a score or two of converts among the genuine working classes, and even these few did not all remain faithful unto death. Some of them, however, it must be admitted, laboured and suffered to the end with the courage and endurance of true martyrs.

It was not merely the indifference or hostility of the masses that the propagandists had to complain of. The police soon got on their track, and did not confine themselves to persuasion and logical arguments. Towards the end of 1873 they arrested some members of the central directing group in St. Petersburg, and in the following May they discovered in the province of Sarátof an affiliated organisation with which nearly 800 persons were connected, about one-fifth of them

belonging to the female sex. A few came of well-to-do families—sons and daughters of minor officials or small landed proprietors—but the great majority were poor students of humbler origin, a large contingent being supplied by the sons of the poor parish clergy. In other provinces the authorities made similar discoveries. Before the end of the year a large proportion of the propagandists were in prison, and the centralised organisation, so far as such a thing existed, was destroyed. Gradually it dawned on the minds even of the Don Quixotes that pacific propaganda was no longer possible, and that attempts to continue it could lead only to useless sacrifices.

For a time there was universal discouragement in the revolutionary ranks; and among those who had escaped arrest there were mutual recriminations and endless discussions about the causes of failure and the changes to be made in modes of action. The practical results of these recriminations and discussions was that the partisans of a slow, pacific propaganda retired to the background, and the more impatient revolutionary agitators took possession of the movement. These maintained stoutly that as pacific propaganda had become impossible, stronger methods must be adopted. The masses must be organised so as to offer successful resistance to the Government. Conspiracies must, therefore, be formed, local disorders provoked, and blood made to flow. The part of the country which seemed best adapted for experiments of this kind was the southern and south-eastern region, inhabited by the descendants of the turbulent Cossack population which had raised formidable insurrections under Stenka Razin and Pugatcheff in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here, then, the more impatient agitators began their work. A Kief group called the *Buntari* (rioters), composed of about twenty-

five individuals, settled in various localities as small shopkeepers or horse dealers, or went about as workmen or peddlers.

One member of the group has given us in his Reminiscences an amusing account of the experiment. Everywhere the agitators found the peasants suspicious and inhospitable, and consequently they had to suffer a great deal of discomfort. Some of them at once gave up the task as hopeless. The others settled in a village and began operations. Having made a topographic survey of the locality, they worked out an ingenious plan of campaign; but they had no recruits for the future army of insurrection, and if they had been able to get recruits, they had no arms for them, and no money wherewith to purchase arms or anything else. In these circumstances they gravely appointed a committee to collect funds, knowing very well that no money would be forthcoming. It was as if a shipwrecked crew in an open boat, having reached the brink of starvation, appointed a committee to obtain a supply of fresh water and provisions! In the hope of obtaining assistance from headquarters a delegate was sent to St. Petersburg and Moscow to explain that for the arming of the population about a quarter of a million of roubles was required. The delegate brought back thirty second-hand revolvers! The Revolutionist who confesses all this * recognises that the whole scheme was childishly unpractical: "We chose the path of popular insurrection because we had faith in the revolutionary spirit of the masses, in its power and its invincibility. That was the weak side of our position; and the most curious part of it was that we drew proofs in support of our theory from history—from the *abortive* insurrections of Razin and Pugatcheff,

* Debogorio-Mokrievitch. Vospominaniya (Reminiscences). Paris, 1894–99.

which took place in an age when the Government had only a small regular army and no railways or telegraphs! We did not even think of attempting a propaganda among the military!"

In the district of Tchigirin the agitators had a little momentary success, but the result was the same. There a student called Stefanovitch pretended that the Tsar was struggling with the officials to benefit the peasantry, and he showed the simple rustics a forged imperial manifesto in which they were ordered to form a society for the purpose of raising an insurrection against the officials, the nobles, and the priests. At one moment (April, 1877) the society had about 600 members, but a few months later it was discovered by the police, and the leaders and peasants were arrested.

When it had thus become evident that propaganda and agitation were alike useless, and when numerous arrests were being made daily, it became necessary for the Revolutionists to reconsider their position, and some of the more moderate proposed to rally to the Liberals, as a temporary measure. Hitherto there had been very little sympathy and a good deal of openly avowed hostility between Liberals and Revolutionists. The latter, convinced that they could overthrow the Autocratic Power by their own unaided efforts, had looked askance at Liberalism because they believed that parliamentary discussions and party struggles would impede rather than facilitate the advent of the Socialist Millennium, and strengthen the domination of the *bourgeoisie* without really improving the condition of the masses. Now, however, when the need of allies was felt, it seemed that constitutional government might be used as a stepping-stone for reaching the Socialist ideal, because it must grant a certain liberty of the Press and of association,

and it would necessarily abolish the existing autocratic system of arresting, imprisoning and exiling, on mere suspicion, without any regular form of legal procedure. As usual, an appeal was made to history, and arguments were easily found in favour of this course of action. The past of other nations had shown that in the march of progress there are no sudden leaps and bounds, and it was therefore absurd to imagine, as the Revolutionists had hitherto done, that Russian Autocracy could be swallowed by Socialism at a gulp. There must always be periods of transition, and it seemed that such a transition period might now be initiated. Liberalism might be allowed to destroy, or at least weaken, Autocracy, and then it might be destroyed in its turn by Socialism of the most advanced type.

Having adopted this theory of gradual historic development, some of the more practical Revolutionists approached the more advanced Liberals and urged them to more energetic action; but before anything could be arranged, the more impatient Revolutionists—notably the group called the *Narodovoltsi* (National-will-ists)—intervened, denounced what they considered an unholy alliance, and proposed a policy of terrorism by which the Government would be frightened into a more conciliatory attitude. Their idea was that the officials who displayed most zeal against the revolutionary movement should be assassinated, and that every act of severity on the part of the Administration should be answered by an act of "revolutionary justice."

As it was evident that the choice between these two courses of action must determine in great measure the future character and ultimate fate of the movement, there was much discussion between the two groups; but the question did not long remain in

suspense. Soon the extreme party gained the upper hand, and the Terrorist policy was adopted. I shall let the Revolutionists themselves explain this momentous decision. In a long proclamation published some years later it is explained thus:—

"The revolutionary movement in Russia began with the so-called 'going in among the people.' The first Russian Revolutionists thought that the freedom of the people could be obtained only by the people itself, and they imagined that the only thing necessary was that the people should absorb Socialistic ideas. To this it was supposed that the peasantry were naturally inclined, because they already possess, in the Rural Commune, institutions which contain the seeds of Socialism, and which might serve as a basis for the reconstruction of society according to Socialist principles. The propagandists hoped, therefore, that in the teachings of West European Socialism the people would recognise its own instinctive creations in riper and more clearly defined forms, and that it would joyfully accept the new teaching.

"But the people did not understand its friends, and showed itself hostile to them. It turned out that institutions born in slavery could not serve as a foundation for the new construction, and that the man who was yesterday a serf, though capable of taking part in disturbances, is not fitted for conscious revolutionary work. With pain in their heart the Revolutionists had to confess that they were deceived in their hopes of the people. Around them were no social revolutionary forces on which they could lean for support, and yet they could not reconcile themselves with the existing state of violence and slavery. Thereupon awakened a last hope—the hope of a drowning man who clutches at a straw: a little group of heroic and self-sacrificing individuals might accomplish with their own strength the difficult task of freeing Russia from the yoke of autocracy. They had to do it themselves, because there was no other means. But would they be able to accomplish it? For them that question did not exist. The struggle of that little group against autocracy was like the heroic means on which a doctor decides when there is no longer any hope of the patient's recovery. Terrorism was the only means that remained, and it had the advantage of giving a natural vent to pent-up feelings, and of seeming a reaction against the cruel persecutions of the Government. The party called the *Narodnaya Volya* (National Will) was accordingly formed, and during several years the world witnessed a spectacle that had never been seen before in history.

The *Narodnaya Volya*, insignificant in numbers but strong in spirit, engaged in single combat with the powerful Russian Government. Neither executions, nor imprisonment with hard labour, nor ordinary imprisonment and exile, destroyed the energy of the Revolutionists. Under their shots fell, one after the other, the most zealous and typical representatives of arbitrary action and violence. . . . ."

It was at this time, in 1877, when propaganda and agitation among the masses were being abandoned for the system of terrorism, but before any assassinations had taken place, that I accidentally came into personal relations with some prominent adherents of the revolutionary movement. One day a young man of sympathetic appearance, whom I did not know and who brought no credentials, called on me in St. Petersburg and suggested to me that I might make public through the English Press what he described as a revolting act of tyranny and cruelty committed by General Trepof, the Prefect of the city. That official, he said, in visiting recently one of the prisons, had noticed that a young political prisoner called Bogolúbof did not salute him as he passed, and he had ordered him to be flogged in consequence. To this I replied that I had no reason to disbelieve the story, but that I had equally no reason to accept it as accurate, as it rested solely on the evidence of a person with whom I was totally unacquainted. My informant took the objection in good part, and offered me the names and addresses of a number of persons who could supply me with any proofs that I might desire.

At his next visit I told him I had seen several of the persons he had named, and that I could not help perceiving that they were closely connected with the revolutionary movement. I then went on to suggest that as the sympathisers with that movement constantly complained that they were systematically misrepre-

sented, calumniated and caricatured, the leaders ought to give to the world an accurate account of their real doctrines, and in this respect I should be glad to assist them. Already I knew something of the subject, because I had many friends and acquaintances among the sympathisers, and had often had with them interminable discussions. With their ideas, so far as I knew them, I felt bound to confess that I had no manner of sympathy, but I flattered myself, and he himself had admitted, that I was capable of describing accurately and criticising impartially doctrines with which I did not agree. My new acquaintance, whom I may call Dimitri Ivan'itch, was pleased with the proposal, and after he had consulted with some of his friends, we came to an agreement by which I should receive all the materials necessary for writing an accurate account of the doctrinal side of the movement. With regard to any conspiracies that might be in progress, I warned him that he must be strictly reticent, because if I came accidentally to know of any terrorist designs, I should consider it my duty to warn the authorities. For this reason I declined to attend any secret conclaves, and it was agreed that I should be instructed without being initiated.

The first step in my instruction was not very satisfactory or encouraging. One day Dimitri Ivan'itch brought me a large manuscript, which contained, he said, the real doctrines of the Revolutionists and the explanation of their methods. I was surprised to find that it was written in English, and I perceived at a glance that it was not at all what I wanted. As soon as I had read the first sentence I turned to my friend and said:

"I am very sorry to find, Dimitri Ivan'itch, that you have not kept your part of the bargain. We agreed,

you may remember, that we were to act towards each other in absolutely good faith, and here I find a flagrant bit of bad faith in the very first sentence of the manuscript which you have brought me. The document opens with the statement that a large number of students have been arrested and imprisoned for distributing books among the people. That statement may be true according to the letter, but it is evidently intended to mislead. These youths have been arrested, as you must know, not for distributing ordinary books, as the memorandum suggests, but for distributing books *of a certain kind.* I have read some of them, and I cannot feel at all surprised that the Government should object to their being put into the hands of the ignorant masses. Take, for example, the one entitled *Khitraya Mekhánika*, and others of the same type. The practical teaching they contain is that the peasants should be ready to rise and cut the throats of the landed proprietors and officials. Now, a wholesale massacre of the kind may or may not be desirable in the interests of Society, and justifiable according to some new code of higher morality. That is a question into which I do not enter. All I maintain is that the writer of this memorandum, in speaking of 'books,' meant to mislead me."

Dimitri Ivan'itch looked puzzled and ashamed. "Forgive me," he said; "I am to blame—not for having attempted to deceive you, but for not having taken precautions. I have not read the manuscript, and I could not if I wished, for it is written in English, and I know no language but my mother-tongue. My friends ought not to have done this. Give me back the paper, and I shall take care that nothing of the sort occurs in future."

This promise was faithfully kept, and I had no

further reason to complain. Dimitri Ivan'itch gave me a considerable amount of information, and lent me a valuable collection of revolutionary pamphlets. Unfortunately the course of tuition was suddenly interrupted by unforeseen circumstances, which I may mention as characteristic of life in St. Petersburg at the time. My servant, an excellent young Russian, more honest than intelligent, came to me one morning with a mysterious air, and warned me to be on my guard, because there were "bad people" going about. On being pressed a little, he explained to me what he meant. Two strangers had come to him, and after offering him a few roubles, had asked him a number of questions about my habits—at what hour I went out and came home, what persons called on me, and much more of the same sort. "They even tried, sir, to get into your sitting-room; but of course I did not allow them. I believe they want to rob you!"

It was not difficult to guess who these "bad people" were, who took such a keen interest in my doings, and who wanted to examine my apartment in my absence. Any doubts I had on the subject were soon removed. On the morrow and following days I noticed that whenever I went out, and wherever I might walk or drive, I was closely followed by two unsympathetic-looking individuals—so closely that when I turned round sharp they ran into me. The first and second times this little accident occurred they received a strong volley of uncere-monious vernacular; but when we became better acquainted, we simply smiled at each other knowingly, as the old Roman augurs are supposed to have done when they met in public unobserved. There was no longer any attempt at concealment or mystification. I knew I was being shadowed, and the

shadowers could not help perceiving that I knew it. Yet, strange to say, they were never changed!

The reader probably assumes that the secret police had somehow got wind of my relations with the Revolutionists. Such an assumption presupposes on the part of the police an amount of intelligence and perspicacity which they do not usually possess. On this occasion they were on an entirely wrong scent, and the very day when I first noticed my shadowers, a high official, who seemed to regard the whole thing as a good joke, told me confidentially what the wrong scent was. At the instigation of an ex-ambassador, from whom I had the misfortune to differ in matters of foreign policy, the *Moscow Gazette* had denounced me publicly by name as a person who was in the habit of visiting daily the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—doubtless with the nefarious purpose of obtaining by illegal means secret political information—and the police had concluded that I was a fit and proper person to be closely watched. In reality, my relations with the Russian Foreign Office, though inconvenient to the ex-ambassador, were perfectly regular and above-board—sanctioned, in fact, by Prince Gortchakoff—but the indelicate attentions of the secret police were none the less extremely unwelcome, because some intelligent police-agent might get on to the real scent, and cause me serious inconvenience. I determined, therefore, to break off all relations with Dimitri Ivan'itch and his friends, and postpone my studies to a more convenient season; but that decision did not entirely extricate me from my difficulties. The collection of revolutionary pamphlets was still in my possession, and I had promised to return it. For some little time I did not see how I could keep my promise without compromising myself or others, but at last—after having had my

shadowers carefully shadowed in order to learn accurately their habits, and having taken certain elaborate precautions, with which I need not trouble the reader, as he is not likely ever to require them—I paid a visit secretly to Dimitri Ivan'itch in his small room, almost destitute of furniture, handed him the big parcel of pamphlets, warned him not to visit me again, and bade him farewell.

Thereupon we went our separate ways, and I saw him no more. Whether he subsequently played a leading part in the movement I never could ascertain, because I did not know his real name; but if the conception which I formed of his character was at all accurate, he probably ended his career in Siberia, for he was not a man to look back after having put his hand to the plough. That is a peculiar trait of the Russian Revolutionists of the period in question. Their passion for realising an impossible ideal was incurable. Many of them were again and again arrested; and as soon as they escaped or were liberated, they almost invariably went back to their revolutionary activity, and worked energetically until they again fell into the clutches of the police.

From this digression into the sphere of personal reminiscences I return now, and take up again the thread of the narrative.

We have seen how the propaganda and the agitation had failed, partly because the masses showed themselves indifferent or hostile, and partly because the Government adopted vigorous repressive measures. We have seen, too, how the leaders found themselves in face of a formidable dilemma; either they must abandon their schemes or they must attack their persecutors. The more energetic among them, as I have already stated, chose the latter alternative, and they proceeded at once to carry out their policy. In the

course of a single year (February, 1878, to February, 1879) a whole series of terrorist crimes was committed; in Kief, an attempt was made on the life of the Public Prosecutor, and an officer of gendarmerie was stabbed; in St. Petersburg the Chief of the Political Police of the Empire (General Mezentsef) was assassinated in broad daylight in one of the central streets, and a similar attempt was made on his successor (General Drenteln); at Khárkof the Governor (Prince Krapotkin) was shot dead when entering his residence. During the same period two members of the revolutionary organisation, accused of treachery, were "executed" by order of local Committees. In most cases the perpetrators of the crimes contrived to escape. One of them became well known in Western Europe as an author under the pseudonym of Stepniak.

Terrorism had not the desired effect. On the contrary, it stimulated the zeal and activity of the authorities, and in the course of the winter of 1878–79 hundreds of arrests—some say as many as 2,000—were made in St. Petersburg alone. Driven to desperation, the Revolutionists still at large decided that it was useless to assassinate mere officials; the *fons et origo mali* must be reached; a blow must be struck at the Tsar himself! The first attempt was made by a young man called Solovyoff, who fired several shots at Alexander II. as he was walking near the Winter Palace, but none of them took effect.

This policy of aggressive terrorism did not meet with universal approval among the Revolutionists, and it was determined to discuss the matter at a Congress of delegates from various local circles. The meetings were held in June, 1879, two months after Solovyoff's unsuccessful attempt, at two provincial towns, Lipetsk and Vorónezh. It was there agreed in principle to

confirm the decision of the terrorist *Narodovoltsi*. As the Liberals were not in a position to create liberal institutions or to give guarantees for political rights, which are the essential condition of any Socialist agitation, there remained for the revolutionary party no other course than to destroy the despotic autocracy. Thereupon a programme of action was prepared, and an Executive Committee elected. From that moment, though there were still many who preferred milder methods, the Terrorists had the upper hand, and they at once proceeded to centralise the organisation and to introduce stricter discipline, with greater precautions to ensure secrecy.

The Executive Committee imagined that autocracy might be destroyed by assassinating the Tsar, and several carefully planned attempts were made. The first plan was to wreck the Emperor's special train when the Imperial family were returning to St. Petersburg from the Crimea. Mines were accordingly laid at three separate points, but they all failed. At the last of the three points (near Moscow) a train was blown up, but it was not the one in which the Imperial family was travelling.

Not at all discouraged by this failure, nor by the discovery of its secret printing-press by the police, the Executive Committee next tried to attain its object by an explosion of dynamite in the Winter Palace when the Imperial family were assembled at dinner. The execution was entrusted to a certain Halturin, one of the few Revolutionists of peasant origin. As an exceptionally clever carpenter and polisher he easily found regular employment in the palace, and he contrived to make a rough plan of the building. This plan, on which the dining-hall was marked with an ominous red cross, fell into the hands of the police, and they made what they considered a

careful investigation; but they failed to unravel the plot and did not discover the dynamite, concealed in the carpenters' sleeping quarters. Halturin showed wonderful coolness while the search was going on, and continued to sleep every night on the explosive, though it caused him excruciating headaches. When he was assured by the chemist of the Executive Committee that the quantity collected was sufficient, he exploded the mine at the usual dinner-hour, and contrived to escape uninjured.* In the guard-room immediately above the spot where the dynamite was exploded ten soldiers were killed and 53 wounded, and in the dining-hall the floor was wrecked, but the Imperial family escaped in consequence of not sitting down to dinner at the usual hour.

For this barbarous act the Executive Committee publicly accepted full responsibility. In a proclamation placarded in the streets of St. Petersburg it declared that, while regretting the death of the soldiers, it was resolved to carry on the struggle with the Autocratic Power until the social reforms should be entrusted to a Constituent Assembly, composed of members freely elected and furnished with instructions from their constituents.

Finding police-repression so ineffectual, Alexander II. determined to try the effect of conciliation, and for this purpose he placed Loris Melikof at the head of the Government, with semi-dictatorial powers (February, 1880). The experiment did not succeed. By the Terrorists it was regarded as "a hypocritical Liberalism outwardly and a veiled brutality within," while in the official world it was condemned as an act of culpable weakness on the part of the autocracy.

* After living some time in Rumania he returned to Russia under the name of Stepanof, and in 1882 he was tried and executed for complicity in the assassination of General Strelnikof.

One consequence of it was that the Executive Committee was encouraged to continue its efforts, and, as the police became much less active, it was enabled to improve the revolutionary organisation. In a circular sent to the affiliated provincial associations it explained that the only source of legislation must be the national will,* and as the Government would never accept such a principle, its hand must be forced by a great popular insurrection, for which all available forces should be organised. The peasantry, as experience had shown, could not yet be relied on, but efforts should be made to enrol the workmen of the towns. Great importance was attached to propaganda in the army; but as few conversions had been made among the rank and file, attention was to be directed chiefly to the officers, who would be able to carry their subordinates with them at the critical moment.

While thus recommending the scheme of destroying autocracy by means of a popular insurrection in the distant future, the Committee had not abandoned more expeditious methods, and it was at that moment hatching a plot for the assassination of the Tsar. During the winter months his Majesty was in the habit of holding on Sundays a small parade in the riding-school near the Michael Square in St. Petersburg. On Sunday, March 3rd, 1881, the streets by which he usually returned to the Palace had been undermined at two places, and on an alternative route several conspirators were posted with hand-grenades concealed under their great-coats. The Emperor chose the alternative route. Here, at a signal given by Sophia Perovski, the first grenade was thrown by a student called Ryssakoff, but it merely wounded some members of the escort. The Emperor stopped and got out of

* Hence the designation *Narodovoltsi* (which, as we have seen, means literally National-will-ists), adopted by this section of the revolutionaries.

his sledge, and as he was making inquiries about the wounded soldiers, a second grenade was thrown by a youth called Grinevitski, with fatal effect. Alexander II. was conveyed hurriedly to the Winter Palace, and died almost immediately.

By this act the members of the Executive Committee proved their energy and their talent as conspirators, but they at the same time showed their short-sightedness and their political incapacity; for they had made no preparations for immediately seizing the power which they so ardently coveted—with the intention of using it, of course, entirely for the public good. If the facts were not so well authenticated, we might dismiss the whole story as incredible. A group of young people, certainly not more than thirty or forty in number, without any organised material force behind them, without any influential accomplices in the army or the official world, without any prospect of support from the masses, and with no plan for immediate action after the assassination, deliberately provoked the crisis for which they were so hopelessly unprepared. It has been suggested that they expected the Liberals to seize the supreme power, but this explanation is evidently an afterthought, because they knew that the Liberals were as unprepared as themselves, and they regarded them at that time as dangerous rivals. Besides this, the explanation is quite irreconcilable with the proclamation issued by the Executive Committee immediately afterwards. The most charitable way of explaining the conduct of the conspirators is to suppose that they were actuated more by blind hatred of the autocracy and its agents than by political calculations of a practical kind—that they acted simply like a wounded bull in the arena, which shuts its eyes and recklessly charges its tormentors.

The murder of the Emperor had not at all the effect which the *Narodovoltsi* anticipated. On the contrary, it destroyed their hopes of success. Many people of liberal convictions who sympathised vaguely with the revolutionary movement without taking part in it, and who did not condemn very severely the attacks on police officials, were horrified when they found that the would-be reformers did not spare even the sacred person of the Tsar! At the same time, the police officials, who had become lax and inefficient under the conciliatory *régime* of Loris Melikof, recovered their old zeal, and displayed such inordinate activity that the revolutionary organisation was paralysed and in great measure destroyed. Six of the regicides were condemned to death, and five of them publicly executed, amongst the latter Sophia Perovski, one of the most active and personally sympathetic personages among the Revolutionists. Scores of those who had taken an active part in the movement were in prison or in exile. For a short time the propaganda was continued among military and naval officers, and various attempts at reorganisation, especially in the Southern provinces, were made, but they all failed. A certain Degaief, who had taken part in the formation of military circles, turned informer, and aided the police. By his treachery not only a considerable number of officers, but also Vera Filipof, a young lady of remarkable ability and courage, who was the leading spirit in the attempts at reorganisation, was arrested. There were still a number of leaders living abroad, and from time to time they sent emissaries to revive the propaganda, but these efforts were all fruitless.

One of the active members of the revolutionary party, Leo Deutsch, who has since published his Memoirs, relates how the tide of revolution ebbed

rapidly at this time. "Both in Russia and abroad," he says, "I had seen how the earlier enthusiasm had given way to scepticism; men had lost faith, though many of them would not allow that it was so. It was clear to me that a reaction had set in for many years." Of the attempts to resuscitate the movement he says: "The untried and unskilfully managed societies were run to earth before they could undertake anything definite, and the unity and inter-dependence which characterised the original band of members had disappeared." With regard to the want of unity, another prominent revolutionist (Maslof) wrote to a friend (Dragomanof) at Geneva in 1882 in terms of bitter complaint. He accused the Executive Committee of trying to play the part of chief of the whole revolutionary party, and declared that its centralising tendencies were more despotic than those of the Government. Distributing orders among its adherents without initiating them into its plans, it insisted on unquestioning obedience. The Socialist youth, ardent adherents of Federalism, were indignant at this treatment, and began to understand that the Committee used them simply as *chair à canon*. The writer described in vivid colours the mutual hostility which reigned among various fractions of the party, and which manifested itself in accusations and even in denunciations; and he predicted that the *Narodnaya Volya*, which had organised the various acts of terrorism, culminating in the assassination of the Emperor, would never develop into a powerful revolutionary party. It had sunk into the slough of untruth, and it could only continue to deceive the Government and the public.

In the mutual recriminations several interesting admissions were made. It was recognised that neither the educated classes nor the common people were

capable of bringing about a revolution: the former were not numerous enough, and the latter were devoted to the Tsar and did not sympathise with the revolutionary movement, though they might perhaps be induced to rise at a moment of crisis. It was considered doubtful whether such a rising was desirable, because the masses, being insufficiently prepared, might turn against the educated minority. In no case could a popular insurrection attain the object which the Socialists had in view, because the power would either remain in the hands of the Tsar—thanks to the devotion of the common people—or it would fall into the hands of the Liberals, who would oppress the masses worse than the autocratic Government had done. Further, it was recognised that acts of terrorism were worse than useless, because they were misunderstood by the ignorant, and tended to inflame the masses against the leaders. It seemed necessary, therefore, to return to the pacific propaganda. Tikhomirof, who was nominally directing the movement from abroad, became utterly discouraged, and wrote in 1884 to one of his emissaries in Russia (Lopátin): "You now see Russia, and can convince yourself that it does not possess the material for a vast work of reorganisation. . . . . I advise you seriously not to make superhuman efforts, and not to make a scandal in attempting the impossible. . . . . If you do not want to satisfy yourself with trifles, come away and await better times."

In examining the material relating to this period one sees clearly that the revolutionary movement had got into a vicious circle. As pacific propaganda had become impossible, in consequence of the opposition of the authorities and the vigilance of the police, the Government could be overturned only by a general insurrection; but the general insurrection could not

be prepared without pacific propaganda. As for terrorism, it had become discredited. Tikhomirof himself came to the conclusion that the terrorist idea was altogether a mistake, not only morally, but also from the point of view of political expediency. A party, he explained, has either the force to overthrow the Government, or it has not; in the former case it has no need of political assassination, and in the latter the assassinations have no effect, because Governments are not so stupid as to let themselves be frightened by those who cannot overthrow them. Plainly there was nothing to be done but to wait for better times, as he had suggested, and the better times did not seem to be within measurable distance. He himself, after publishing a brochure entitled "Why I ceased to be a Revolutionist," made his peace with the Government, and others followed his example.* In one prison nine made formal recantations, among them Emilianof, who held a reserve bomb ready when Alexander II. was assassinated.

Occasional acts of terrorism showed that there was still fire under the smouldering embers, but they were few and far between. The last serious incident of the kind during this period was the regicide conspiracy of Sheviryoff in March, 1887. The conspirators, carrying the bombs, were arrested in the principal street of St. Petersburg, and five of them were hanged. The railway accident of Borki, which happened in the following year, and in which the Imperial family had a very narrow escape, ought perhaps to be added to the list, because there is reason to believe that it was the work of Revolutionists.

By this time all the cooler heads among the Revolutionists, especially those who were living abroad in

* Tikhomirof subsequently worked against the Social Democrats in Moscow, in the interests of the Government.

personal safety, had come to understand that the Socialist ideal could not be attained by popular insurrection, terrorism, or conspiracies, and consequently that further activity on the old lines was absurd. Those of them who did not abandon the enterprise in despair reverted to the idea that the Autocratic Power, impregnable against frontal attacks, might be destroyed by prolonged siege operations. This change of tactics is reflected in the revolutionary literature. In 1889, for example, the editor of the *Svobódnaya Rossía* declared that the aim of the movement now was political freedom—not only as a stepping-stone to social reorganisation, but as a good in itself. This is, he explains, the only possible revolution at present in Russia. "For the moment there can be no other immediate practical aim. Ulterior aims are not abandoned, but they are not at present within reach. . . . . The Revolutionists of the Seventies and the Eighties did not succeed in creating among the peasantry or the town workmen anything which had even the appearance of a force capable of struggling with the Government; and the Revolutionists of the future will have no greater success until they have obtained such political rights as personal inviolability. Our immediate aim, therefore, is a National Assembly controlled by local self-government, and this can be brought about only by a union of all the revolutionary forces."

There were still indications, it is true, that the old spirit of terrorism was not yet quite extinct: Captain Zolotykhin, for example, an officer of the Moscow secret police, was assassinated by a female revolutionist in 1890. But such incidents were merely the last fitful sputterings of a lamp that was going out for want of oil. In 1892 Stepniak declared it evident to all that the professional Revolutionists could not alone

overthrow autocracy, however great their energy and heroism; and he arrived at the same conclusion as the writer just quoted. After reviewing the situation as a whole, he says: "It is only from the evolutionist's point of view that the struggle with autocracy has a meaning. From any other standpoint it must seem a sanguinary farce—a mere exercise in the art of self-sacrifice!" Such are the conclusions arrived at in 1892 by a man who had been in 1878 one of the leading Terrorists, and who had with his own hand assassinated General Mezentsef, Chief of the Political Police.

Thus the revolutionary movement, after passing through four stages, which I may call the academic, the propagandist, the insurrectionary, and the terrorist, had failed to accomplish its object. One of those who had taken an active part in it, and who, after spending two years in Siberia as a political exile, escaped and settled in Western Europe, could write thus: "Our revolutionary movement is dead, and we who are still alive stand by the grave of our beautiful departed, and discuss what is wanting to her. One of us thinks that her nose should be improved; another suggests a change in her chin or her hair. We do not notice the essential, that what our beautiful departed wants is life; that it is not a matter of hair or eyebrows, but of a living soul, which formerly concealed all defects, and made her beautiful, and which now has flown away. However we may invent changes and improvements, all these things are utterly insignificant in comparison with what is really wanting, and what we cannot give; for who can breathe a living soul into a corpse?"

In truth, the movement which I have endeavoured to describe was at an end; but another movement, having the same ultimate object, was coming into

existence, and it constitutes one of the essential factors of the present situation. Some of the exiles in Switzerland and Paris had become acquainted with the Social Democratic and Labour movements in Western Europe, and they believed that the strategy and tactics employed in these movements might be adopted in Russia. How far they have succeeded in carrying out this policy, I shall relate presently; but before entering on this subject, I must explain how the application of such a policy had been rendered possible by changes in the economic conditions. Russia had begun to create rapidly a great manufacturing industry and an industrial proletariat. This will form the subject of next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

INDUSTRIAL PROGRESS AND THE PROLETARIAT.

Russia till lately a Peasant Empire—Early Efforts to Introduce Arts and Crafts—Peter the Great and his Successors—Manufacturing Industry long remains an Exotic—The Cotton Industry—The Reforms of Alexander II.—Protectionists and Free Trade—Progress under High Tariffs—M. Witte's Policy—How Capital was obtained—Increase of Exports—Foreign Firms cross the Customs Frontier—Rapid Development of Iron Industry—A Commercial Crisis—M. Witte's Position undermined by Agrarians and Doctrinaires—M. Plehve a Formidable Opponent—His Apprehensions of Revolution—Fall of M. Witte—The Industrial Proletariat.

FIFTY years ago Russia was still essentially a peasant Empire, living by agriculture of a primitive type, and supplying her other wants chiefly by home industries, as was the custom in Western Europe during the Middle Ages.

For many generations her rulers had been trying to transplant into their wide dominions the arts and crafts of the West, but they had formidable difficulties to contend with, and their success was not nearly so great as they desired. We know that as far back as the fourteenth century there were cloth-workers in Moscow, for we read in the chronicles that the workshops of these artisans were sacked when the town was stormed by the Tartars. Workers in metal had also appeared in some of the larger towns by that time, but they do not seem to have risen much above the level of ordinary blacksmiths. They were destined, however, to make more rapid progress than other classes of artisans, because the old Tsars of Muscovy, like other semi-barbarous potentates, admired and envied the industries of more civilised countries mainly from the military point of view.

What they wanted most was a plentiful supply of good arms wherewith to defend themselves and attack their neighbours, and it was to this object that their most strenuous efforts were directed.

As early as 1475 Ivan III., the grandfather of Ivan the Terrible, sent a delegate to Venice to seek out for him an architect who, in addition to his own craft, knew how to make guns; and in due course appeared in the Kremlin a certain Muroli, called Aristotle by his contemporaries on account of his profound learning. He undertook "to build churches and palaces, to cast big bells and cannons, to fire off the said cannons, and to make every sort of castings very cunningly"; and for the exercise of these various arts it was solemnly stipulated in a formal document that he should receive the modest salary of ten roubles monthly. With regard to the military products, at least, the Venetian faithfully fulfilled his contract, and in a short time the Tsar had the satisfaction of possessing a "cannon-house," subsequently dignified with the name of "arsenal." Some of the natives learned the foreign art, and exactly a century later (1586) a Russian, or at least a Slav, called Tchekhof, produced a famous "Tsar-cannon," weighing as much as 96,000 lbs.

The connection thus established with the mechanical arts of the West was always afterwards maintained, and we find frequent notices of the fact in contemporary writers. In the reign of the grandfather of Peter the Great, for example, two paper-works were established by an Italian; and velvet for the Tsar and his *Boyárs*, gold brocades for ecclesiastical vestments, and rude kinds of glass for ordinary purposes were manufactured under the august patronage of the enlightened ruler. His son Alexis went a good many steps further, and scandalised his God-fearing

orthodox subjects by his love of foreign heretical inventions. It was in his German suburb of Moscow that young Peter, who was to become "the Great," made his first acquaintance with the useful arts of the West.

When the great reformer came to the throne he found in his Tsardom, besides many workshops, some ten foundries, all of which were under orders "to cast cannons, bombs, and bullets, and to make arms for the service of the State." This seemed to him only a beginning, especially for the mining and iron industry, in which he was particularly interested. By importing foreign artificers and placing at their disposal big estates, with numerous serfs, in the districts where minerals were plentiful, and by carefully stipulating that these foreigners should teach his subjects well, and conceal from them none of the secrets of the craft, he created in the Ural a great iron industry, which still exists at the present day. Finding by experience that State-mines and State ironworks were a heavy drain on his insufficiently replenished treasury, he transferred some of them to private persons, and this policy was followed occasionally by his successors. Hence the gigantic fortunes of the Demidofs and other families. The Shuvalovs, for example, in 1760 possessed, for the purpose of working their mines and ironworks, no less than 33,000 serfs and a corresponding amount of land. Unfortunately the concessions were generally given not to enterprising business-men, but to influential court-dignitaries, who confined their attention to squandering the revenues, and not a few of the mines and works reverted to the Government.

The army required not only arms and ammunition, but also uniforms and blankets. Great

attention, therefore, was paid to the woollen industry from the reign of Peter downwards. In the time of Catherine there were already 120 cloth factories, but they were on a very small scale, according to modern conceptions. Ten factories in Moscow, for example, had amongst them only 104 looms, 130 workers, and a yearly output valued at 200,000 roubles.

While thus largely influenced in its economic policy by military considerations, the Government did not entirely neglect other branches of manufacturing industry. Ever since Russia had pretensions to being a civilised power its rulers have always been inclined to pay more attention to the ornamental than the useful—to the varnish rather than the framework of civilisation—and we need not therefore be surprised to find that long before the native industry could supply the materials required for the ordinary wants of humble life, attempts were made to produce such things as Gobelin tapestries. I mention this merely as an illustration of a characteristic trait of the national character, the influence of which may be found in many other spheres of official activity.

If Russia did not attain the industrial level of Western Europe, it was not from want of ambition and effort on the part of the rulers. They worked hard, if not always wisely, for this end. Manufacturers were exempted from rates and taxes, and even from military service, and some of them, as I have said, received large estates from the Crown on the understanding that the serfs should be employed as workmen. At the same time they were protected from foreign competition by prohibitive tariffs. In a word, the manufacturing industry was nursed and fostered in a way to satisfy the most thorough-going Protectionist, especially those branches

which worked up native raw material such as ores, flax, hemp, wool, and tallow. Occasionally the official interference and anxiety to protect public interests went further than the manufacturers desired. On more than one occasion the authorities fixed the price of certain kinds of manufactured goods, and in 1754 the Senate, being anxious to protect the population against fires, ordered all glass and iron works within a radius of 200 versts around Moscow to be destroyed! In spite of such obstacles, the manufacturing industry as a whole made considerable progress. Between 1729 and 1762 the number of establishments officially recognised as factories rose from 26 to 335.

These results did not satisfy Catherine II., who ascended the throne in 1762. Under the influence of her friends the French Encyclopédistes, she imagined for a time that the official control might be relaxed, and that the system of employing serfs in the factories and foundries might be replaced by free labour, as in Western Europe; monopolies might be abolished, and all liege subjects, including the peasants, might be allowed to embark in industrial undertakings as they pleased, "for the benefit of the State and the nation." All this looked very well on paper, but Catherine never allowed her sentimental Liberalism to injure seriously the interests of her Empire, and she accordingly refrained from putting the *laissez-faire* principle largely into practice. Though a good deal has been written about her economic policy, it is hardly distinguishable from that of her predecessors. Like them, she maintained high tariffs, accorded large subsidies, and even prevented the export of raw material, in the hope that it might be worked up at home; and when the prices in the woollen market rose very high, she compelled the manufacturers to supply

the army with cloth at a price fixed by the authorities. In short, the old system remained practically unimpaired, and notwithstanding the steady progress made during the reign of Nicholas I. (1825-55), when the number of factory hands rose from 210,000 to 380,000, the manufacturing industry as a whole continued to be, until the serfs were emancipated in 1861, a hot-house plant which could flourish only in an officially heated atmosphere.

There was one branch of it, however, to which this remark does not apply. The art of cotton-spinning and cotton-weaving struck deep root in Russian soil. After remaining for generations in the condition of a cottage industry—the yarn being distributed among the peasants, and worked up by them in their own homes—it began, about 1825, to be modernised. Though it still required to be protected against foreign competition, it rapidly outgrew the necessity for direct official support. Big factories driven by steam-power were constructed, the number of hands employed rose to 110,000, and the foundations of great fortunes were laid. Strange to say, many of the future millionaires were uneducated serfs. Sava Morózof, for example, who was to become one of the industrial magnates of Moscow, was a serf belonging to a proprietor called Ryumin; most of the others were serfs of Count Sheremetyef—the owner of a large estate on which the industrial town of Ivanovo had sprung up—who was proud of having millionaires among his serfs, and who never abused his authority over them. The great movement, however, was not effected without the assistance of foreigners. Foreign foremen were largely employed, and in the work of organisation a leading part was played by a German called Ludwig Knoop. Beginning life as a commercial traveller for an

English firm, he soon became a large cotton importer, and when in 1840 a feverish activity was produced in the Russian manufacturing world by the Government's permission to import English machines, his firm supplied these machines to the factories on condition of obtaining a share in the business. It has been calculated that it obtained in this way a share in no less than 122 factories, and hence arose among the peasantry a popular saying:

> "Where there is a church, there you find a pope,
> And where there is a factory, there you find a Knoop."*

The biggest creation of the firm was a factory built at Narva in 1856, with nearly half a million spindles driven by water-power.

In the second half of last century a revolution was brought about in the manufacturing industry generally by the Emancipation of the serfs, the rapid extension of railways, the facilities for creating limited liability companies, and by certain innovations in the financial policy of the Government. The Emancipation put on the market an unlimited supply of cheap labour; the construction of railways in all directions increased a hundredfold the means of communication; and the new banks and other credit institutions, aided by an overwhelming influx of foreign capital, encouraged the foundation and extension of industrial and commercial enterprises of every description. For a time there was great excitement. It was commonly supposed that in all matters relating to trade and industry Russia had suddenly jumped up to the level of Western Europe, and many people in St. Petersburg, carried away by the prevailing enthusiasm for Liberalism in general and the doctrines of Free Trade in particular, were in favour of abolishing Protec-

* Gdye tserkov—tam pop;
A gdye fabrika—tam Knop.

tionism as an antiquated restriction on liberty and an obstacle to economic progress.

At one moment the Government was disposed to yield to the current, but it was restrained by an influential group of conservative Political Economists, who appealed to patriotic sentiment, and by the Moscow manufacturers, who declared that Free Trade would ruin the country. After a little hesitation it proceeded to raise, instead of lowering, the Protectionist tariff. In 1869–76 the *ad valorem* duties were, on an average, under thirteen per cent., but from that time onwards they rose steadily until the last five years of the century, when they averaged thirty-three per cent., and were for some articles very much higher. In this way the Moscow industrial magnates were protected against the influx of cheap foreign goods, but they were not saved from foreign competition; for many foreign manufacturers, in order to enjoy the benefit of the high duties, founded factories in Russia. Even the firmly established cotton industry suffered from these intruders. Industrial suburbs containing not a few cotton factories sprang up around St. Petersburg; and a small Polish village called Lodz, near the German frontier, grew rapidly into a prosperous town of 300,000 inhabitants, and became a serious rival to the ancient Muscovite capital. So severely was the competition of this young upstart felt that the Moscow merchants petitioned the Emperor to protect them by drawing a customs frontier round the Polish provinces, but their petition was not granted.

Under the shelter of the high tariffs the manufacturing industry as a whole has made rapid progress, and the cotton trade has kept well to the front. In that branch, between 1861 and 1897, the number of hands employed rose from 120,000 to 325,000, and

the estimated value of the products from 72 to 478 millions of roubles. In 1899 the number of spindles was considerably over six millions, and the number of automatic weaving machines 145,000.

The iron industry has likewise progressed rapidly, though it has not yet outgrown the necessity for Government support, and it is not yet able to provide for all home wants. About forty years ago it received a powerful impulse from the discovery that in the provinces to the north of the Crimea and the Sea of Azof there were enormous quantities of iron ore and beds of good coal in close proximity to each other. Thanks to this discovery and to other facts of which I shall have occasion to speak presently, this district, which had previously been purely agricultural and pastoral, has outstripped the famous Ural region; and has become the Black Country of Russia. The vast lonely steppe, where formerly one saw merely the peasant-farmer, the shepherd, and the *Tchumák*,* driving along somnolently with his big, long-horned white bullocks, is now dotted over with busy industrial settlements of mushroom growth and great ironworks—some of them unfinished; while at night the landscape is lit up with the lurid flames of gigantic blast-furnaces. In this wonderful transformation, as in the history of Russian industrial progress generally, a great part was played by foreigners. The pioneer who did most in this district was a Welshman, John Hughes, who began life as the son and pupil of a blacksmith, and whose sons are now directors of the biggest of the South Russian ironworks.

Much as the South has progressed industrially in recent years, it still remains far behind those indus-

* The *Tchumák*, a familiar figure in the songs and legends of Little Russia, was the carrier who, before the construction of railways, transported the grain to the great markets, and brought back merchandise to the interior. He is gradually disappearing.

trial portions of the country which were thickly settled at an earlier date. From this point of view the most important region is the group of provinces clustering round Moscow; next comes the St. Petersburg region, including Livonia; and thirdly Poland. As for the various kinds of industry, the most important category is that of textile fabrics, the second that of articles of nutrition, and the third that of ores and metals. The total production, if we may believe certain statistical authorities, places Russia now among the industrial nations of the world in the fifth place, immediately after the United States, England, Germany, and France, and a little before Austria.

The man who has in recent times carried out most energetically the policy of protecting and fostering native industries is M. Witte, a name now familiar to Western Europe. An avowed disciple of the great German economist, Friedrich List, about whose works he published a brochure in 1888, he held firmly, from his youth upwards, the doctrine that "each nation should above all things develop harmoniously its natural resources to the highest possible degree of independence, protecting its own industries and preferring the national aim to the pecuniary advantage of individuals." As a corollary to this principle he declared that purely agricultural countries are economically backward and intellectually stagnant, being condemned to pay tribute to the nations who have learned to work up their raw products into more valuable commodities. The good old English doctrine that certain countries were intended by Providence to be eternally agricultural, and that their function in the economy of the universe is to supply raw material for the industrial nations, was always in his eyes an abomination — an ingenious, nefarious invention of the Manchester

school, astutely invented for the purpose of keeping the younger nations permanently in a state of economic bondage, for the benefit of English manufacturers. To emancipate Russia from this thraldom by enabling her to create a great native industry, sufficient to supply all her own wants, was the aim of his policy and the constant object of his untiring efforts. Those who have had the good fortune to know him personally must have often heard him discourse eloquently on this theme, supporting his views by quotations from the economists of his own school, and by illustrations drawn from the history of his own and other countries.

A necessary condition of realising this aim was that there should be high tariffs. These already existed, and they might be raised still higher, but in themselves they were not enough. For the rapid development of the native industry an enormous capital was required, and the first problem to be solved was how this capital could be obtained. At one moment the energetic Minister conceived the project of creating a fictitious capital by inflating the paper currency; but this idea proved unpopular. When broached in the Council of State it encountered determined opposition. Some of the members of that body, especially M. Bunge, who had been himself Minister of Finance, and who remembered the evil effects of the inordinate inflation of the currency on foreign exchanges during the Turkish War, advocated strongly the opposite course—adoption of the gold standard, for which M. Vishnegradski, M. Witte's immediate predecessor, had made considerable preparations. Being a practical man without inveterate prejudices, M. Witte gave up the scheme which he could not carry through, and adopted the views of his opponents. He would introduce a gold currency

as recommended; but how was the requisite capital to be obtained? It must be procured from abroad, somehow, and the simplest way seemed to be to stimulate the export of native products. For this purpose the railways were extended,* the traffic rates manipulated, and the means of transport improved generally.

A certain influx of gold was thus secured, but not nearly enough for the object in view.† Some more potent means, therefore, had to be employed, and the inventive minister evolved a new scheme. If he could only induce foreign capitalists to undertake manufacturing industries in Russia, they would, at one and the same time, bring into the country the capital required, and they would co-operate powerfully in that development of the national industry which he so ardently wished. No sooner had he roughly sketched out his plan—for he was not a man to let the grass grow under his feet—than he set himself to put it into execution by letting it be known in the financial world that the Government was ready to open a great field for lucrative investments, in the form of profitable enterprises under the control of those who subscribed the capital.

Foreign capitalists responded warmly to the call. Crowds of concession-hunters, projectors, company promoters, *et hoc genus omne*, collected in St. Petersburg, offering their services on the most tempting terms; and all of them who could make out a plausible case were well received at the Ministry of Finance. It

* In 1892, when M. Witte undertook the financial administration, there were 30,620 versts of railway, and at the end of 1900 there were 51,288 versts.

† In 1891 the total value of the exports was roughly £70,000,000. It then fell, in consequence of bad harvests, to 45 millions, and did not recover the previous maximum until 1897, when it stood at 73 millions. Thereafter there was a steady rise till 1901, when the total was estimated at 76 millions.

was there explained to them that in many branches of industry, such as the manufacture of textile fabrics, there was little or no room for newcomers, but that in others the prospects were most brilliant. Take, for example, the iron industries of Southern Russia. The boundless mineral wealth of that region was still almost intact, and the few works which had been there established were paying very large dividends. The works founded by John Hughes, for example, had repeatedly divided considerably over twenty per cent., and there was little fear for the future, because the Government had embarked on a great scheme of railway extension, requiring an unlimited amount of rails and rolling-stock. What better opening could be desired? Certainly the opening seemed most attractive, and into it rushed the crowd of company promoters, followed by stock-jobbers and brokers, playing lively pieces of what the Germans call *Zukunftsmusik*. An unwary and confiding public, especially in Belgium and France, listened to the enchanting strains of the financial syrens, and invested largely. Quickly the number of completed ironworks in that region rose from nine to seventeen, and in the short space of three years the output of pig-iron was nearly doubled. In 1900 there were 44 blast-furnaces in working order, and ten more were in course of construction. And all this time the Imperial revenue increased by leaps and bounds, so that the introduction of the gold currency was effected without difficulty. M. Witte was declared to be the greatest minister of his time—a Russian Colbert or Turgot, or perhaps the two rolled into one.

Then came a change. Competition and over-production led naturally to a fall in prices, and at the same time the demand decreased, because the railway-building activity of the Government slackened.

Alarmed at this state of things, the banks which had helped to start and foster the huge and costly enterprises contracted their credits. By the end of 1899 the disenchantment was general and widespread. Some of the companies were so weighted by the preliminary financial obligations, and had conducted their affairs in such careless, reckless fashion, that they had soon to shut down their mines and close their works. Even solid undertakings suffered. The shares of the Briansk works, for example, which had given dividends as high as 30 per cent., fell from 500 to 230. The Mamontof companies—supposed to be one of the strongest financial groups in the country—had to suspend payment, and numerous other failures occurred. Nearly all the commercial banks, having directly participated in the industrial concerns, were rudely shaken. M. Witte, who had been for a time the idol of a certain section of the financial world, became very unpopular, and was accused of misleading the investing public. Among the accusations brought against him some at least could easily be refuted. He may have made mistakes in his policy, and may have been himself over-sanguine, but surely, as he subsequently replied to his accusers, it was no part of his duty to warn company promoters and directors that they should refrain from over-production, and that their enterprises might not be as remunerative as they expected. As to whether there is any truth in the assertion that he held out prospects of larger Government orders than he actually gave, I cannot say. That he cut down prices, and showed himself a hard man to deal with, there seems no doubt.

The reader may naturally be inclined to jump to the conclusion that the commercial crisis just referred to was the cause of M. Witte's fall. Such a con-

clusion would be entirely erroneous. The crisis happened in the winter of 1899-1900, and M. Witte remained Finance Minister until the autumn of 1903. His fall was the result of causes of a totally different kind, and these I propose now to explain, because the explanation will throw light on certain very curious and characteristic conceptions at present current in the Russian educated classes.

Of course there were certain causes of a purely personal kind, but I shall dismiss them in a very few words. I remember once asking a well-informed friend of M. Witte's what he thought of him as an administrator and a statesman. The friend replied: "Imagine a negro of the Gold Coast let loose in modern European civilisation!" This reply, like most epigrammatic remarks, is a piece of gross exaggeration, but it has a modicum of truth in it. In the eyes of well-trained Russian officials M. Witte was a Titanic, reckless character, capable at any moment of playing the part of the bull in the china shop. As a masterful person, brusque in manner and incapable of brooking contradiction, he had made for himself many enemies; and his restless, irrepressible energy had led him to encroach on the provinces of all his colleagues. Possessing as he did the control of the purse, his interference could not easily be resisted. The Ministers of Interior, War, Agriculture, Public Works, Public Instruction, and Foreign Affairs had all occasion to complain of his incursions into their departments. In contrast to his colleagues he was not only extremely energetic, but he was ever ready to assume an astounding amount of responsibility; and as he was something of an opportunist, he was, perhaps, not always Quixotically scrupulous in the choice of expedients for attaining his ends.

Altogether M. Witte was an inconvenient person-

age in an administration in which strong personality is regarded as entirely out of place, and in which personal initiative is supposed to reside exclusively in the Tsar. In addition to all this he was a man who felt keenly, and when he was irritated he did not always keep the unruly member under strict control. If I am correctly informed, it was some imprudent and not very respectful remarks, repeated by a subordinate and transmitted by a Grand Duke to the Tsar, which were the immediate cause of his transfer from the influential post of Minister of Finance to the ornamental position of President of the Council of Ministers; but that was merely the proverbial last straw that breaks the camel's back. His position was already undermined, and it is the undermining process which I wish to describe.

The first to work for his overthrow were the Agrarian Conservatives. They could not deny that, from the purely fiscal point of view, his administration was a marvellous success; for he was rapidly doubling the revenue, and he had succeeded in replacing the fluctuating depreciated paper currency by a gold coinage; but they maintained that he was killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. Evidently the tax-paying power of the rural classes was being overstrained, for they were falling more and more into arrears in the payment of their taxes, and their impoverishment was yearly increasing. All their reserves had been exhausted, as was shown by the famines of 1891–92, when the Government had to spend hundreds of millions to feed them. Whilst the land was losing its fertility, those who had to live by it were increasing in numbers at an alarming rate. Already in some districts one-fifth of the peasant households had no longer any land of their own, and of those who still possessed land, a large propor-

tion had no longer the cattle and horses necessary to till and manure their allotments. No doubt M. Witte was beginning to perceive his mistake, and had done something to palliate the evils by improving the system of collecting the taxes and abolishing the duty on passports, but such merely palliative remedies could have little effect. While a few capitalists were amassing gigantic fortunes, the masses were slowly and surely advancing to the brink of starvation. The welfare of the agriculturists, who constitute nine-tenths of the whole population, was being ruthlessly sacrificed, and for what? For the creation of a manufacturing industry which rested on an artificial, precarious basis, and which had already begun to decline.

So far the Agrarians, who champion the interests of the agricultural classes. Their views were confirmed and their arguments strengthened by an influential group of men whom I may call, for want of a better name, the philosophers or doctrinaire interpreters of history, who have, strange to say, more influence in Russia than in any other country.

The Russian educated classes desire that the nation should be wealthy and self-supporting, and they recognise that for this purpose a large manufacturing industry is required; but they are reluctant to make the sacrifices necessary to attain the object in view, and they imagine that, somehow or other, these sacrifices may be avoided. Sympathising with this frame of mind, the doctrinaires explain that the rich and prosperous countries of Europe and America obtained their wealth and prosperity by so-called "Capitalism"—that is to say, by a peculiar social organisation, in which the two main factors are a small body of rich capitalists and manufacturers, and an enormous pauper proletariat living from hand to

mouth, at the mercy of the heartless employers of labour. Russia has lately followed in the footsteps of those wealthy countries, and if she continues to do so, she will inevitably be saddled with the same disastrous results—plutocracy, pauperism, unrestrained competition in all spheres of activity, and a greatly intensified struggle for life, in which the weaker will necessarily go to the wall.*

Happily there is, according to these theorists, a more excellent way, and Russia can adopt it if she only remains true to certain mysterious principles of her past historic development. Without attempting to expound those mysterious principles, to which I have repeatedly referred in previous chapters, I may mention briefly that the traditional patriarchal institutions on which the theorists found their hopes of a happy social future for their country are the rural Commune, the native home-industries, and the peculiar co-operative institutions called *Artéls*. How these remnants of a semi-patriarchal state of society are to be practically developed in such a way as to withstand the competition of manufacturing industry organised on modern "Capitalist" lines, no one has hitherto been able to explain satisfactorily, but many people indulge in ingenious speculations on the subject, like children planning the means of diverting with their little toy spades a formidable inundation. In my humble opinion, the whole theory is a delusion; but it is held firmly—I might almost say fanatically—by those who, in opposition to the indiscriminate admirers of West-European and American civilisation, consider themselves genuine Russians and exceptionally good patriots. M. Witte has never belonged to that class.

* Free competition in all spheres of activity, leading to social inequality, plutocracy, and pauperism, is the favourite bugbear of Russian theorists; and who is not a theorist in Russia? The fact indicates the prevalence of Socialist ideas in the educated classes.

He believes that there is only one road to national prosperity—the road by which Western Europe has travelled—and along this road he tried to drive his country as rapidly as possible. He threw himself, therefore, heart and soul into what his opponents call "Capitalism," by raising State loans, organising banks and other credit institutions, encouraging the creation and extension of big factories, which must inevitably destroy the home-industry, and even—*horribile dictu!*—undermining the rural Commune, and thereby adding to the ranks of the landless proletariat, in order to increase the amount of cheap labour for the benefit of the capitalists.

With the arguments thus supplied by Agrarians and doctrinaires, quite honest and well-meaning according to their lights, it was easy to sap M. Witte's position. Among his opponents, the most formidable was the late M. Plehve, Minister of Interior—a man of a totally different stamp. A few months before his tragic end, I had a long and interesting conversation with him, and I came away deeply impressed. Having repeatedly had conversations of a similar kind with M. Witte, I could compare, or rather contrast, the two men. Both of them evidently possessed an exceptional amount of mental power and energy, but in the one it was volcanic, and in the other it was concentrated, and thoroughly under control. In discussion, the one reminded me of the self-taught, slashing swordsman; the other of the dexterous fencer, carefully trained in the use of the foils, who never launches out beyond the point at which he can quickly recover himself. As to whether M. Plehve was anything more than a bold, energetic, clever official, there may be differences of opinion, but he certainly could assume the airs of a profound and polished statesman, capable of looking at things from

a much higher point of view than the ordinary *tchinóvnik*, and he had the talent of tacitly suggesting that a great deal of genuine, enlightened statesmanship lay hidden under the smooth surface of his cautious reserve. Once or twice I could perceive that when criticising the present state of things he had his volcanic colleague in his mind's eye; but the covert allusions were so vague and so carefully worded that the said colleague, if he had been present, would hardly have been justified in entering a personal protest. A statesman of the higher type, I was made to feel, should deal not with personalities, but with things, and it would be altogether unbecoming to complain of a colleague in presence of an outsider. Thus his attitude towards his opponent was most correct, but it was not difficult to infer that he had little sympathy with the policy of the Ministry of Finance.

From other sources I learned the cause of this want of sympathy. Being Minister of Interior, and having served long in the Police Department, M. Plehve considered that his first duty was the maintenance of public order and the protection of the person and autocracy of his august master. He was therefore the determined enemy of revolutionary tendencies, in whatever garb or disguise they might appear; and as a statesman he had to direct his attention to everything likely to increase those tendencies in the future. Now it seemed that in the financial policy which had been followed for some years there were germs of future revolutionary fermentation. The peasantry were becoming impoverished, and were therefore more likely to listen to the insidious suggestions of Socialist agitators; and already agrarian disturbances had occurred in the provinces of Kharkof and Poltava. The indus-

trial proletariat which was being rapidly created was being secretly organised by the revolutionary Social Democrats, and already there had been serious labour troubles in some of the large towns. For any future revolutionary movement the Proletariat would naturally supply recruits. Then, at the other end of the social scale, a class of rich capitalists was being created, and everybody who has read a little history knows that a rich and powerful *tiers-état* cannot be permanently conciliated with autocracy. Though himself neither an agrarian nor a Slavophil doctrinaire, M. Plehve could not but have a certain sympathy with those who were forging thunderbolts for the official annihilation of M. Witte. He was too practical a man to imagine that the hands on the dial of economic progress could be set back and a return made to moribund patriarchal institutions; but he thought that at least the pace might be moderated. The Minister of Finance need not be in such a desperate, reckless hurry, and it was desirable to create conservative forces which might counteract the revolutionary forces which his impulsive colleague was inadvertently calling into existence.

Some of the forgers of thunderbolts went a great deal further, and asserted or insinuated that M. Witte was himself consciously a revolutionist, with secret, malevolent intentions. In support of their insinuations they cited certain cases in which well-known Socialists had been appointed professors in academies under the control of the Ministry of Finance, and they pointed to the Peasant Bank, which enjoyed M. Witte's special protection. At first it had been supposed that the bank would have an anti-revolutionary influence by preventing the formation of a landless proletariat and increasing the number of small landowners, who are always and everywhere

conservative so far as the rights of private property are concerned. Unfortunately its success roused the fears of the more conservative section of the landed proprietors. These gentlemen, as I have already mentioned, pointed out that the estates of the nobles were rapidly passing into the hands of the peasantry, and that if this process were allowed to continue, the hereditary Noblesse, which had always been the surest support of the throne, would drift into the towns and there sink into poverty or amalgamate with the commercial plutocracy, and help to form a *tiers-état*, which would be hostile to the Autocratic Power.

In these circumstances it was evident that the headstrong Minister of Finance could maintain his position only so long as he enjoyed the energetic support of the Emperor, and this support, for reasons which I have indicated above, failed him at the critical moment. While his work was still unfinished he was suddenly compelled to relinquish his post and accept a position in which, it was supposed, he would cease to have any influence in the administration.

Thus fell the Russian Colbert-Turgot, or whatever else he may be called. Whether financial difficulties in the future will lead to his reinstatement as Minister of Finance remains to be seen; but in any case his work cannot be undone. He has increased manufacturing industry to an unprecedented extent, and, as M. Plehve perceived, the industrial proletariat, which manufacturing industry on capitalist lines always creates, has provided a new field of activity for the revolutionists. I return, therefore, to the development of the revolutionary movement in order to describe its present phase, the first-fruits of which have been revealed in the labour disturbances in St. Petersburg and other industrial centres.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN ITS LATEST PHASE.

Influence of Capitalism and Proletariat on the Revolutionary Movement—What was to be done?—Reply of Plekhânof—A New Departure—Karl Marx's Theories applied to Russia—Beginnings of a Social Democratic Movement—The Labour Troubles of 1894-96 in St. Petersburg—The Social Democrats' Plan of Campaign—Schism in the Party—Trade Unionism and Political Agitation—The Labour Troubles of 1902—How the Revolutionary Groups are differentiated from each other—Social Democracy and Constitutionalism—Terrorism—The Socialist-Revolutionaries—The Militant Organisation—Attitude of the Government—Factory Legislation—Government's Scheme for Undermining Social Democracy—Father Gapon and his Labour Association—The Great Strike in St. Petersburg—Father Gapon goes over to the Revolutionaries.

THE development of manufacturing industry on capitalist lines, and the consequent formation of a large industrial proletariat, produced great disappointment in all the theorising sections of the educated classes. The thousands of men and women who had, since the accession of the Tsar-Emancipator in 1855, taken a keen, enthusiastic interest in the progress of their native country, all had believed firmly that in some way or other Russia would escape "the festering sores of Western civilisation." Now experience had proved that the belief was an illusion, and those who had tried to check the natural course of industrial progress were constrained to confess that their efforts had been futile. Big factories were increasing in size and numbers, while cottage industries were disappearing or falling under the power of middlemen, and the *Artéls* had not advanced a step in their expected development. The factory workers, though all of peasant origin, were losing their connection with their native villages, and

abandoning their allotments of the Communal land. They were becoming, in short, a hereditary caste in the town population, and the Slavophil dream of every factory worker having a house in the country could no longer be indulged in. Nor was there any prospect of a change for the better in the future. With the increase of competition among the manufacturers, the uprooting of the muzhik from the soil must go on more and more rapidly, because employers must insist more and more on having thoroughly trained operatives ready to work steadily all the year round.

This state of things had a curious effect on the course of the revolutionary movement.

Let me recall very briefly the successive stages through which the movement had already passed. It had been inaugurated, as we have seen, by the Nihilists, the ardent young representatives of a "storm-and-stress" period, in which the venerable traditions and respected principles of the past were rejected and ridiculed, and the newest ideas of Western Europe were eagerly adopted and distorted. Like the majority of their educated countrymen, they believed that in the race of progress, Russia was about to overtake and surpass the nations of the West, and that this desirable result was to be attained by making a *tabula rasa* of existing institutions, and reconstructing society according to the plans of Proudhon, Fourier, and the other writers of the early Socialist school.

When the Nihilists had expended their energies and exhausted the patience of the public in theorising, talking, and writing, a party of action came upon the scene. Like the Nihilists, they desired political, social, and economic reforms of the most thoroughgoing kind, but they believed that such things could

not be effected by the educated classes alone, and they determined to call in the co-operation of the people. For this purpose they tried to convert the masses to the gospel of Socialism. Hundreds of them became missionaries and "went in among the people." But the gospel of Socialism proved unintelligible to the uneducated, and the more ardent, incautious missionaries fell into the hands of the police. Those of them who escaped, perceiving the error of their ways, but still clinging to the hope of bringing about a political, social, and economic revolution, determined to change their tactics. The emancipated serf had shown himself incapable of "prolonged revolutionary activity," but there was reason to believe that he was, like his forefathers in the time of Stenka Razin and Pugatcheff, capable of rising and murdering his oppressors. He must be used, therefore, for the destruction of the Autocratic Power and the bureaucracy, and then it would be easy to reorganise society on a basis of universal equality, and to take permanent precautions against capitalism and the creation of a Proletariat.

The hopes of the agitators proved as delusive as those of the propagandists. The muzhik turned a deaf ear to their instigations, and the police soon prevented their further activity. Thus the would-be root-and-branch reformers found themselves in a dilemma. Either they must abandon their schemes for the moment or they must strike immediately at their persecutors. They chose, as we have seen, the latter alternative, and after vain attempts to frighten the Government by acts of terrorism against zealous officials, they assassinated the Tsar himself; but before they had time to think of the constructive part of their task, their organisation was destroyed by the Autocratic Power and the bureaucracy, and those of

them who escaped arrest had to seek safety in emigration to Switzerland and Paris.

Then arose, all along the line of the defeated, decimated Revolutionists, the cry, "What is to be done?" Some replied that the shattered organisation should be reconstructed, and a number of secret agents were sent successively from Switzerland for this purpose. But their efforts, as they themselves confessed, were fruitless, and despondency seemed to be settling down permanently on all, except a few fanatics, when a voice was heard calling on the fugitives to rally round a new banner and carry on the struggle by entirely new methods. The voice came from a revolutionologist (if I may use such a term) of remarkable talent, called M. Plekhánof, who had settled in Geneva with a little circle of friends, calling themselves the "Labour Emancipation Group." His views were expounded in a series of interesting publications, the first of which was a brochure entitled "Socialism and the Political Struggle," published in 1883.

According to M. Plekhánof and his group the revolutionary movement had been conducted up to that moment on altogether wrong lines. All previous revolutionary groups had acted on the assumption that the political revolution and the economic reorganisation of society must be effected simultaneously, and consequently they had rejected contemptuously all proposals for reforms, however radical, of a merely political kind. These had been considered, as I have mentioned in a previous chapter, not only as worthless, but as positively prejudicial to the interests of the working classes, because so-called political liberties and parliamentary government would be sure to consolidate the domination of the *bourgeoisie*. That such had generally been the immediate effect of parliamen-

tary institutions was admitted, but it did not follow that the creation of such institutions should be opposed. On the contrary, they ought to be welcomed, not merely because, as some revolutionists had already pointed out, propaganda and agitation could be more easily carried on under a constitutional *régime*, but because constitutionalism is certainly the most convenient, and perhaps the only, road by which the socialistic ideal can ultimately be attained. This is a dark saying, but it will become clearer when I have explained, according to the new apostles, a second error into which their predecessors had fallen.

That second error was the assumption that all true friends of the people, whether Conservatives, Liberals, or Revolutionaries, ought to oppose to the utmost the development of capitalism. In the light of Karl Marx's discoveries in economic science everyone must recognise this to be an egregious mistake. That great authority, it was said, had proved that the development of capitalism was irresistible, and his conclusions had been confirmed by the recent history of Russia, for all the economic progress made during the last half century had been on capitalist lines.

Even if it were possible to arrest the capitalist movement it is not desirable from the revolutionary point of view. In support of this thesis Karl Marx is again cited. He has shown that capitalism, though an evil in itself, is a necessary stage of economic and social progress. At first it is prejudicial to the interests of the working classes, but in the long run it benefits them, because the ever-growing Proletariat must, whether it desires it or not, become a political party, and as a political party it must one day break the domination of the *bourgeoisie*. As soon as it has obtained the predominant political power, it will confiscate, for the public good, the instruments of

production—factories, foundries, machines, &c.—by expropriating the capitalists. In this way all the profits which accrue from production on a large scale, and which at present go into the pockets of the capitalists, will be distributed equally among the workmen.

Thus began a new phase of the revolutionary movement, and, like all previous phases, it remained for some years in the academic stage, during which there were endless discussions on theoretical and practical questions. Lavroff, the prophet of the old propaganda, treated the new ideas "with grandfatherly severity," and Tikhomirof, the leading representative of the moribund *Narodnaya Volya*, which had prepared the acts of terrorism, maintained stoutly that the West European methods recommended by Plekhánof were inapplicable to Russia. The Plekhánof group replied in a long series of publications, partly original, and partly translations from Marx and Engels, explaining the doctrines and aims of the Social Democrats.

Seven years were spent in this academic literary activity—a period of comparative repose for the Russian secret police—and about 1890 the propagandists of the new school began to work cautiously in St. Petersburg. At first they confined themselves to forming little secret circles for making converts, and they found that the ground had been to some extent prepared for the seed which they had to sow. The workmen were discontented, and some of the more intelligent amongst them, who had formerly been in touch with the propagandists of the older generation, had learned that there was an ingenious and effective means of getting their grievances redressed. How was that possible? By combination and strikes. For the uneducated workers this was an important discovery,

and they soon began to put the suggested remedy to a practical test. In the autumn of 1894 labour troubles broke out in the Nevski engineering works and the arsenal, and in the following year in the Thornton factory and the cigarette works. In all these strikes the Social Democratic agents took part behind the scenes. Avoiding the main errors of the old propagandists, who had offered the workmen merely abstract Socialist theories, which no uneducated person could reasonably be expected to understand, they adopted a more rational method. Though impervious to abstract theories, the Russian workman is not at all insensible to the prospect of bettering his material condition, and getting his everyday grievances redressed. Of these grievances the ones he felt most keenly were the long hours, the low wages, the fines arbitrarily imposed by the managers, and the brutal severity of the foremen. By helping him to have these grievances removed the Social Democratic agents might gain his confidence, and when they had come to be regarded by him as his real friends they might widen his sympathies, and teach him to feel that his personal interests were identical with the interests of the working classes as a whole. In this way it would be possible to awaken in the industrial proletariat generally a sort of *esprit de corps*, which is the first condition of political organisation.

On these lines the agents set to work. Having formed themselves into a secret association called the "Union for the Emancipation of the Working Classes," they gradually abandoned the narrow limits of coterie-propaganda and prepared the way for agitation on a larger scale. Among the discontented workmen they distributed a large number of carefully written tracts, in which the material grievances were formulated, and the whole political system, with

its police, gendarmes, Cossacks, and tax-gatherers, was criticised in no friendly spirit, but without violent language. In introducing into the programme this political element, great caution had to be exercised, because the workmen did not yet perceive clearly any close connection between their grievances and the existing political institutions, and those of them who belonged to the older generation regarded the Tsar as the incarnation of disinterested benevolence. Bearing this in mind, the Union circulated a pamphlet for the enlightenment of the labouring population, in which the writer refrained from all reference to the Autocratic Power, and described simply the condition of the labouring classes, the heavy burdens they had to bear, the abuses of which they were the victims, and the inconsiderate way in which they were treated by their employers. This pamphlet was eagerly read, and from that moment, whenever labour troubles arose, the men applied to the Social Democratic agents to assist them in formulating their grievances.

Of course, the assistance had to be given secretly, because there were always police spies in the factories, and all persons suspected of aiding the labour movement were liable to be arrested and exiled. In spite of this danger the work was carried on with great energy, and in the summer of 1896 the field of operations was extended. During the coronation ceremonies of that year the factories and workshops in St. Petersburg were closed, and the men considered that for these days they ought to receive wages as usual. When their demand was refused, 40,000 of them went out on strike. The Social Democratic Union seized the opportunity and distributed tracts in large quantities. For the first time such tracts were read aloud at workmen's meetings and applauded by the

audience. The Union encouraged the workmen in their resistance, but advised them to refrain from violence, so as not to provoke the intervention of the police and the military, as they had imprudently done on some previous occasions. When the police did intervene and expelled some of the strike leaders from St. Petersburg, the agitators had an excellent opportunity of explaining that the authorities were the protectors of the employers and the enemies of the working classes. These explanations counteracted the effect of an official proclamation to the workmen, in which M. Witte tried to convince them that the Tsar was constantly striving to improve their condition. The struggle was decided, not by arguments and exhortations, but by a more potent force: having no funds for continuing the strike, the men were compelled by starvation to resume work.

This is the point at which the labour movement began to be conducted on a large scale and by more systematic methods. In the earlier labour troubles, the strikers had not understood that the best means of bringing pressure on employers was simply to refuse to work, and they had often proceeded to show their dissatisfaction by ruthlessly destroying their employers' property. This had brought the police, and sometimes the military, on the scene, and numerous arrests had followed. Another mistake made by the inexperienced strikers was that they had neglected to create a reserve fund from which they could draw the means of subsistence when they no longer received wages and could no longer obtain credit at the factory provision store. Efforts were now made to correct these two mistakes, and with regard to the former they were fairly successful, for wanton destruction of property ceased to be a prominent feature of labour troubles; but strong reserve funds have not yet been

created, so that the strikes have never been of long duration.

Though the strikes had led, so far, to no great practical, tangible results, the new ideas and aspirations were spreading rapidly in the factories and workshops, and they had already struck such deep root that some of the genuine workmen wished to have a voice in the managing committee of the Union, which was composed exclusively of educated men. When a request to that effect was rejected by the committee a lengthy discussion took place, and it soon became evident that underneath the question of organisation lay a most important question of principle. The workmen wished to concentrate their efforts on the improvement of their material condition, and to proceed on what we should call trade unionist lines, whereas the committee wished them to aim also at the acquisition of political rights. Great determination was shown on both sides. An attempt of the workmen to maintain a secret organ of their own with the view of emancipating themselves from the "Politicals" ended in failure; but they received sympathy and support from some of the educated members of the party, and in this way a schism took place in the Social Democrat camp. After repeated ineffectual attempts to find a satisfactory compromise the question was submitted to a Congress, which was held in Switzerland in 1900; but the discussions merely accentuated the differences of opinion, and the two parties constituted themselves into separate independent groups. The one under the leadership of Plekhánof, and calling itself the Revolutionary Social Democrats, held to the Marx doctrines in all their extent and purity, and maintained the necessity of constant agitation in the political sense. The other, calling itself the Union of Foreign Social Democrats, inclined to the trade unionism pro-

gramme, and proclaimed the necessity of being guided by political expediency rather than inflexible dogmas. Between the two a wordy warfare was carried on for some time in pedantic, technical language; but, though habitually brandishing their weapons and denouncing their antagonists in true Homeric style, they were really allies, struggling towards a common end—two sections of the Social Democratic party differing from each other on questions of tactics.

The two divergent tendencies have often reappeared in the subsequent history of the movement. During ordinary peaceful times the economic or trade unionist tendency can generally hold its own, but as soon as disturbances occur and the authorities have to intervene, the political current quickly gains the upper hand. This was exemplified in the labour troubles which took place at Rostoff-on-the-Don in 1902. During the first two days of the strike the economic demands alone were put forward, and in the speeches which were delivered at the meetings of workmen no reference was made to political grievances. On the third day one orator ventured to speak disrespectfully of the Autocratic Power, but he thereby provoked signs of dissatisfaction in the audience. On the fifth and following days, however, several political speeches were made, ending with the cry of "Down with Tsarism!" and a crowd of 30,000 workmen agreed with the speakers. Thereafter occurred similar strikes in Odessa, the Caucasus, Kief, and Central Russia, and they all had a political rather than a purely economic character.

I must now endeavour to explain clearly the point of view and plan of campaign of this new movement, which I may call the revolutionary Renaissance.

The ultimate aim of the new reformers was the same as that of all their predecessors—the thorough

reorganisation of Society on Socialistic principles. According to their doctrines, Society as at present constituted consists of two great classes, called variously the exploiters and the exploited, the shearers and the shorn, the capitalists and the workers, the employers and the employed, the tyrants and the oppressed; and this unsatisfactory state of things must go on so long as the so-called *bourgeois* or capitalist *régime* continues to exist. In the new heaven and the new earth of which the Socialist dreams, this unjust distinction is to disappear; all human beings are to be equally free and independent, all are to co-operate spontaneously with brains and hands to the common good, and all are to enjoy in equal shares the natural and artificial good things of this life.

So far there has never been any difference of opinion among the various groups of Russian thorough-going revolutionists. All of them, from the antiquated Nihilist down to the Social Democrat of the latest type, have held these views. What has differentiated them from each other is the greater or less degree of impatience to realise the ideal.

The most impatient were the Anarchists, who grouped themselves around Bakunin. They wished to overthrow immediately by a frontal attack all existing forms of government and social organisation, in the hope that chance, or evolution, or natural instinct, or sudden inspiration or some other mysterious force, would create something better. They themselves declined to aid this mysterious force even by suggestions, on the ground that, as one of them has said, "to construct is not the business of the generation whose duty is to destroy." Notwithstanding the strong impulsive element in the national character, these reckless, ultra-impatient doctrinaires never became numerous, and never succeeded in forming

an organised group, probably because the young generation in Russia were too much occupied with the actual and future condition of their own country to embark on schemes of cosmopolitan anarchism, such as Bakunin recommended.

Next in the scale of impatience came the group of believers in Socialist agitation among the masses, with a view to overturning the existing Government and putting themselves in its place as soon as the masses were sufficiently organised to play the part destined for them. Between them and the Anarchists the essential points of difference were that they admitted the necessity of some years of preparation, and they intended, when the Government was overturned, not to preserve indefinitely the state of anarchy, but to put in the place of autocracy, limited monarchy, or the republic, a strong, despotic Government thoroughly imbued with Socialistic principles. As soon as it had laid firmly the foundations of the new order of things it was to call together a National Assembly, from which it was to receive, I presume, a bill of indemnity for the benevolent tyranny which it had temporarily exercised.

Impatience a few degrees less intense produced the next group, the partisans of pacific Socialist propaganda. They maintained that there was no necessity for overthrowing the old order of things till the masses had been intellectually prepared for the new, and they objected to the foundation of the new *régime* being laid by despots, however well-intentioned in the Socialist sense. The people must be made happy and preserved in a state of happiness by the people themselves.

In the last place came the least impatient of all, the Social Democrats, who differ widely from all the preceding categories.

All previous revolutionary groups had systematically rejected the idea of a gradual transition from the *bourgeois* to the Socialist *régime*. They would not listen to any suggestion about a constitutional monarchy or a democratic republic even as a mere intermediate stage of social development. All such things, as part and parcel of the *bourgeois* system, were anathematised. There must be no half-way houses between present misery and future happiness; for many weary travellers might be tempted to settle there in the desert, and fail to reach the promised land. "Ever onward" should be the watchword, and no time should be wasted on the foolish struggles of political parties and the empty vanities of political life.

Not thus thought the Social Democrat. He was much wiser in his generation. Having seen how the attempts of the impatient groups had ended in disaster, and knowing that, if they had succeeded, the old effete despotism would probably have been replaced by a young, vigorous one more objectionable than its predecessor, he determined to try a more circuitous but surer road to the goal which the impatient people had in view. In his opinion the distance from the present Russian *régime* protected by autocracy to the future Socialist paradise was far too great to be traversed in a single stage, and he knew of one or two comfortable rest-houses on the way. First there was the rest-house of Constitutionalism, with parliamentary institutions. For some years the *bourgeoisie* would doubtless have a parliamentary majority, but gradually, by persistent effort, the Fourth Estate would gain the upper hand, and then the Socialist millennium might be proclaimed. Meanwhile, what had to be done was to gain the confidence of the masses, especially of the factory workers,

who were more intelligent and less conservative than the peasantry, and to create powerful labour organisations as material for a future political party.

This programme implied, of course, a certain unity of action with the constitutionalists, from whom, as I have said, the revolutionists of the old school had stood sternly aloof. There was now no question of a formal union, and certainly no idea of "a union of hearts," because the Socialists knew that their ultimate aim would be strenuously opposed by the Liberals, and the Liberals knew that an attempt was being made to use them as a cat's-paw; but there seemed to be no reason why the two groups should not observe towards each other a benevolent neutrality, and march side by side as far as the half-way house, where they could consider the conditions of the further advance.

When I first became acquainted with the Russian Social Democrats, I imagined that their plan of campaign was of a purely pacific character; and that they were, unlike their predecessors, an evolutionary, as distinguished from a revolutionary, party. Subsequently I discovered that this conception was not quite accurate. In ordinary quiet times they use merely pacific methods, and they feel that the Proletariat is not yet sufficiently prepared, intellectually and politically, to assume the great responsibilities which are reserved for it in the future. Moreover, when the moment comes for getting rid of the Autocratic Power, they would prefer a gradual process of liquidation to a sudden cataclysm. So far they may be said to be evolutionaries rather than revolutionaries, but their plan of campaign does not entirely exclude violence. They would not consider it their duty to oppose the use of violence on the part of the more impatient sections of the Revolutionists, and

they would have no scruples about utilising disturbances for the attainment of their own ends. Public agitation, which is always likely in Russia to provoke violent repression by the authorities, they regard as necessary for keeping alive and strengthening the spirit of opposition; and when force is used by the police they approve of the agitators using force in return. To acts of terrorism, however, they are opposed on principle.

Who, then, are the Terrorists, who have assassinated so many great personages, including the Grand Duke Serge? In reply to this question I must introduce the reader to another group of the revolutionists who have usually been in hostile, rather than friendly, relations with the Social Democrats, and who call themselves the Socialist-Revolutionaries (*Sotstalisty-Revolutsionéry*).

It will be remembered that the Terrorist group, commonly called *Narodnaya Vólya* or *Narodovoltsi*, which succeeded in assassinating Alexander II., were very soon broken up by the police and most of the leading members were arrested. A few escaped, of whom some remained in the country and others emigrated to Switzerland or Paris, and efforts at reorganisation were made, especially in the southern and western provinces, but they proved ineffectual. At last, sobered by experience and despairing of further success, some of the prisoners and a few of the exiles—notably Tikhomirof, who was regarded as the leader—made their peace with the Government, and for some years terrorism seemed to be a thing of the past. Passing through Russia on my way home from India and Central Asia at that time, I came to the conclusion that the young generation had recovered from its prolonged attack of brain-fever, and had entered on a more normal, tranquil, and healthy period of existence.

My expectations proved too optimistic. About 1894 the *Narodnaya Volya* came to life again, with all its Terrorist traditions intact; and shortly afterwards appeared the new group which I have just mentioned, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, with somewhat similar principles and a better organisation. For some seven or eight years the two groups existed side by side, and then the *Narodnaya Volya* disappeared, absorbed probably by its more powerful rival.

During the first years of their existence neither group was strong enough to cause the Government serious inconvenience, and it was not till 1897–98 that they found means of issuing manifestoes and programmes. In these the *Narodovoltsi* declared that their immediate aims were the annihilation of Autocracy, the convocation of a National Assembly and the reorganisation of the Empire on the principles of federation and local self-government, and that for the attainment of these objects the means to be employed should include popular insurrections, military conspiracies, bombs and dynamite.

Very similar, though ostensibly a little more eclectic, was the programme of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. Their ultimate aim was declared to be the transfer of political authority from the Autocratic Power to the people, the abolition of private property in the means of production, and in general the reorganisation of national life on Socialist principles. On certain points they were at one with the Social Democrats. They recognised, for example, that the social reorganisation must be preceded by a political revolution, that much preparatory work was necessary, and that attention should be directed first to the industrial proletariat as the most intelligent section of the masses. On the other hand they maintained that it was a mistake to confine the revolutionary activity

to the working classes of the towns, who were not strong enough to overturn the Autocratic Power. The agitation ought, therefore, to be extended to the peasantry, who were quite "developed" enough to understand at least the idea of land-nationalisation; and for the carrying out of this part of the programme a special organisation was created.

With so many opinions in common it seemed at one moment as if the Social Democrats and the Socialist-Revolutionaries might unite their forces for a combined attack on the Government; but, apart from the mutual jealousy and hatred which so often characterise revolutionary as well as religious sects, they were prevented from coalescing, or even cordially co-operating, by profound differences both in doctrine and in method.

The Social Democrats are essentially doctrinaires. Thorough-going disciples of Karl Marx, they believe in what they consider the immutable laws of social progress, according to which the Socialistic ideal can be reached only through capitalism; and the intermediate political revolution, which is to substitute the will of the people for the Autocratic Power, must be effected by the conversion and organisation of the industrial proletariat. With the spiritual pride of men who feel themselves to be the incarnations or avatars of immutable law, they are inclined to look down with something very like contempt on mere empirics who are ignorant of scientific principles and are guided by considerations of practical expediency. The Socialist-Revolutionaries seem to them to be empirics of this kind because they reject the tenets, or at least deny the infallibility, of the Marx school, cling to the idea of partially resisting the overwhelming influence of capitalism in Russia, hope that the peasantry will play an important

part in bringing about the political revolution, and are profoundly convinced that the advent of political liberty may be greatly accelerated by the use of terrorism. On this last point they stated their views very frankly in a pamphlet which they published in 1902 under the title of "Our Task." (*Nasha Zadatcha*). It is there said:

"One of the powerful means of struggle, dictated by our revolutionary past and present, is political Terrorism, consisting of the annihilation of the most injurious and influential personages of Russian autocracy in given conditions. Systematic Terrorism, in conjunction with other forms of open mass-struggle (industrial riots and agrarian risings, demonstrations, etc.) which receive from Terrorism an enormous, decisive significance, will lead to the disorganisation of the enemy. Terrorist activity will cease only with the victory over autocracy and the complete attainment of political liberty. Besides its chief significance as a means of disorganising, Terrorist activity will serve at the same time as a means of propaganda and agitation, a form of open struggle taking place before the eyes of the whole people, undermining the prestige of Government authority, and calling into life new revolutionary forces, while the oral and literary propaganda is being continued without interruption. Lastly, the Terrorist activity serves for the whole secret revolutionary party as a means of self-defence and of protecting the organisation against the injurious elements of spies and treachery."

In accordance with this theory a "militant organisation" (*Boevaya Organisatsia*) was formed and soon set to work with revolvers and bombs. First an attempt was made on the life of Pobêdonostsef; then the Minister of the Interior, Sipiagin, was assassinated; next, attempts were made on the lives of the Governors of Vilna and Kharkof; and since that time the Governor of Ufa, the Vice-Governor of Elizabetpol, M. Plehve, and the Grand Duke Serge have fallen victims to the Terrorist policy.*

* In this list I have not mentioned the assassination of M. Bogolyepof, Minister of Public Instruction, in 1901, because I do not know whether it should be attributed to the Socialist-Revolutionaries or to the *Narodovoltsi*, who had not yet amalgamated with them.

Though the Social Democrats have no sentimental squeamishness about bloodshed, they objected to this policy on the ground that acts of Terrorism were unnecessary and were apt to prove injurious rather than beneficial to the Revolutionist cause. One of the main objects of every intelligent revolutionary party should be to awaken all classes from their habitual apathy and induce them to take an active part in the political movement; but Terrorism must have a contrary effect by suggesting that political freedom is to be attained, not by the steady pressure and persevering co-operation of the people, but by startling, sensational acts of individual heroism.

The efforts of these two Revolutionary parties, as well as of minor groups, to get hold of the industrial proletariat did not escape the notice of the authorities; and during the labour troubles of 1896, on the suggestion of M. Witte, the Government had considered the question as to what should be done to counteract the influence of the agitators. On that question it had no difficulty in coming to a decision: the condition of the working classes must be improved. An expert official was accordingly instructed to write a report on what had already been done in that direction. In his report it was shown that the Government had long been thinking about the subject. Not to speak of a still-born law about a ten hours' day for artisans, dating from the time of Catherine II., an Imperial commission had been appointed as early as 1859, but nothing practical came of its deliberations until 1882, when legislative measures were taken for the protection of women and children in factories. A little later (1886) other grievances were dealt with and partly removed by regulating contracts of hire, providing that the money derived from deductions and fines should not be appropriated by the employers,

and creating a staff of factory inspectors who should take care that the benevolent intentions of the Government were duly carried out. Having reviewed all these official efforts in 1896, the Government passed in the following year a law prohibiting night work and limiting the working day to eleven and a half hours.

This did not satisfy the workmen. Their wages were still low, and it was difficult to get them increased because strikes and all forms of association were still, as they had always been, criminal offences. On this point the Government remained firm so far as the law was concerned, but it gradually made practical concessions by allowing the workmen to combine for certain purposes. In 1898, for example, in Kharkof, the Engineers' Mutual Aid Society was sanctioned, and gradually it became customary to allow the workmen to elect delegates for the discussion of their grievances with the employers and inspectors.

Finding that these concessions did not check the growing influence of the Social Democratic agitators among the operatives, the Government resolved to go a step further; it would organise the workers on purely trade unionist lines, and would thereby combat the Social Democrats, who always advised the strikers to mix up political demands with their material grievances. The project seemed to have a good prospect of success, because there were many workmen, especially of the older generation, who did not at all like the mixing up of politics, which so often led to arrest, imprisonment and exile, with the practical concerns of everyday life.

The first attempt of the kind was made in Moscow, under the direction of a certain Zubátof, chief of the secret police, who had been himself a revolutionary in his youth, and afterwards an *agent provocateur*. Aided by Tikhomirof, the repentant Terrorist whom I have

already mentioned, Zubátof organised a large workmen's association, with reading-rooms, lectures, discussions and other attractions, and sought to convince the members that they should turn a deaf ear to the Social Democratic agents, and look only to the Government for the improvement of their condition. In order to gain their sympathy and confidence, he instructed his subordinates to take the side of the workmen in all labour disputes, while he himself brought official pressure to bear on the employers. By this means he made a considerable number of converts, and for a time the association seemed to prosper, but he did not possess the extraordinary ability and tact required to play the complicated game successfully, and he committed the fatal mistake of using the office-bearers of the association as detectives for the discovery of the "evil-intentioned." This tactical error had its natural consequences. As soon as the workmen perceived that their professed benefactors were police spies, who did not obtain for them any real improvement of their condition, the popularity of the association rapidly declined. At the same time, the factory owners complained to the Minister of Finance that the police, who ought to be guardians of public order, and who had accused the factory inspectors of stirring up discontent in the labouring population, were themselves creating troubles by inciting the workmen to make inordinate demands. The Minister of Finance at the moment was M. Witte, and the Minister of Interior, responsible for the acts of the police, was M. Plehve, and between these two official dignitaries, who were already in very strained relations, Zubátof's activity formed a new bone of contention. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the very risky experiment came to an untimely end.

In St. Petersburg a similar experiment was made, and it ended much more tragically. There the chief *rôle* was played by a mysterious personage called Father Gapon, who acquired great momentary notoriety. Though a genuine priest, he did not belong by birth, as most Russian priests do, to the ecclesiastical caste. The son of a peasant in Little Russia, where the ranks of the clergy are not hermetically sealed against the other social classes, he aspired to take orders, and after being rusticated from a seminary for supposed sympathy with revolutionary ideas, he contrived to finish his studies and obtain ordination. During a residence in Moscow he took part in the Zubátof experiment, and when that badly conducted scheme collapsed, he was transferred to St. Petersburg and appointed chaplain to a large convict prison. His new professional duties did not prevent him from continuing to take a keen interest in the welfare of the working classes, and in the summer of 1904 he became, with the approval of the police authorities, president of a large labour union called the Society of Russian Workmen, which had eleven sections in the various industrial suburbs of the capital. Under his guidance the experiment proceeded for some months very successfully. He gained the sympathy and confidence of the workmen, and so long as no serious questions arose, he kept his hold on them; but a storm was brewing and he proved unequal to the occasion.

In the first days of 1905, when the economic consequences of the war had come to be keenly felt, a spirit of discontent appeared among the labouring population of St. Petersburg, and on Sunday, January 15th—exactly a week before the famous Sunday when the troops were called into play—a strike began in the Putilof ironworks and spread like wildfire to

the other big works in the neighbourhood. The immediate cause of the disturbance was the dismissal of some workmen and a demand on the part of the Labour Union that they should be reinstated. A deputation, composed partly of genuine workmen and partly of Social Democratic agitators, and led by Gapon, negotiated with the managers of the Putilof works, and failed to effect an arrangement. At this moment Gapon tried hard to confine the negotiations to the points in dispute, whereas the agitators put forward demands of a wider kind, such as the eight-hours working day, and they gradually obtained his concurrence on condition that no political demands should be introduced into the programme. In defending this condition he was supported by the workmen, so that when agitators tried to make political speeches at the meetings they were unceremoniously expelled.

A similar struggle between the "Economists" and the "Politicals" was going on in the other industrial suburbs, notably in the Nevski quarter, where 45,000 operatives had struck work, and the Social Democrats were particularly active. In this section of the Labour Union the most influential member was a young workman called Petroff, who was a staunch Gaponist in the sense that he wished the workers to confine themselves to their own grievances and to resist the introduction of political demands. At first he succeeded in preventing the agitators from speaking at the meetings, but they soon proved too much for him. At one of the meetings on Tuesday, when he happened to be absent, a Social Democrat contrived to get himself elected chairman, and from that moment the political agitators had a free hand. They had a regular organisation composed of an organiser, three "oratorical agitators," and several assistant-organ-

isers who attended the small meetings in the operatives' sleeping-quarters. Besides these there were a certain number of workmen already converted to Social Democratic principles who had learned the art of making political speeches.

The reports of the agitators to the central organisation, written hurriedly during this eventful week, are extremely graphic and interesting. They declare that there is a frightful amount of work to be done and very few to do it. Their stock of Social Democratic pamphlets is exhausted, and they are hoarse from speech-making. In spite of their superhuman efforts the masses remain frightfully "undeveloped." The men willingly collect to hear the orators, listen to them attentively, express approval or dissent, and even put questions; but with all this they remain obstinately on the ground of their own immediate wants, such as the increase of wages and protection against brutal foremen, and they only hint vaguely at more serious demands. The agitators, however, are equally obstinate, and they make a few converts. To illustrate how conversions are made, the following incident is related. At one meeting the cry of "Stop the war!" is raised by an orator without sufficient preparation, and at once a voice is heard in the audience saying: "No, no! The little Japs (*Yaposhki*) must be beaten!" Thereupon a more experienced orator comes forward and a characteristic conversation takes place:—

"Have we much land of our own, my friends?" asks the orator.

"Much!" replies the crowd.

"Do we require Manchuria?"

"No!"

"Who pays for the war?"

"We do!"

"Are our brothers dying, and do your wives and children remain without a bit of bread?"

"So it is!" say many, with a significant shake of the head.

Having succeeded so far, the orator tries to turn the popular indignation upon the Tsar by explaining that he is to blame for all this misery and suffering, but Petroff suddenly appears on the scene and maintains that for the misery and suffering the Tsar is not at all to blame, for he knows nothing about it. It is all the fault of his servants, the *tchinóvniks*.

By this device Petroff suppresses the seditious cry of "Down with autocracy!" which the Social Democrats were anxious to make the watchword of the movement, but he has thereby been drawn from his strong position of "No politics," and he is standing, as we shall see presently, on a slippery incline.

On Thursday and Friday, the activity of the leaders and the excitement of the masses increase. While the Gaponists speak merely of local grievances and material wants, the Social Democrats incite their hearers to a political struggle, advising them to demand a Constituent Assembly, and explaining the necessity for all workmen to draw together and form a powerful political party. The haranguing goes on from morning to night, and agitators drive about from one factory to another to keep the excitement at fever-heat. The police, usually so active on such occasions, do not put in an appearance. Prince Sviatopolk Mirski, the honest, well-intentioned, liberal Minister of the Interior, cannot make up his mind to act with energy, and lets things drift. The agitators themselves are astonished at this extraordinary inactivity. One of them, writing a few days afterwards, says: "The police was paralysed. It would have been easy to arrest Gapon, and discover the

orators. On Friday, the clubs might have been surrounded, and the orators arrested. . . . In a word, decided measures might have been taken, but they were not."

It is not only Petroff that has abandoned his strong position of "No politics"; Gapon is doing likewise. The movement has spread far beyond what he expected, and he is being carried away by the prevailing excitement. With all his benevolent intentions, he is of a nervous, excitable nature, and his besetting sin is vanity. He perceives that by resisting the Social Democrats he is losing his hold on the masses. Early in the week, as we have seen, he began to widen his programme in the Social Democratic sense, and every day he makes new concessions. Before the week is finished a Social Democratic orator can write triumphantly: "In three days we have transformed the Gaponist assemblies into political meetings!" Like Petroff, Gapon seeks to defend the Tsar, and he falls into Petroff's strategical mistake of pretending that the Tsar knows nothing of the sufferings of his people. From that admission to the resolution that the Tsar must somehow be informed personally and directly, by some means outside of the regular official channel, there is but one step, and that step is quickly taken. On Friday morning, Gapon has determined to present with his own hands a petition to His Majesty, and the petition is already drafted, containing demands which go far beyond workmen's grievances. After resisting the Social Democratic agitators so stoutly, he is now going over, bag and baggage, to the Social Democratic camp.

This wonderful change was consummated on the Friday evening at a conference which he held with some delegates of the Social Democrats. From an account written by one of these delegates immediately

after the meeting, we get an insight into the worthy priest's character and motives. In the morning he had written to them: "I have 100,000 workmen, and I am going with them to the Palace to present a petition. If it is not granted, we shall make a revolution. Do you agree?" They did not like the idea, because the Social Democratic policy is to extort concessions, not to ask favours, and to refrain from anything that might increase the prestige of the Autocratic Power. In their reply, therefore, they consented simply to discuss the matter. I proceed now to quote from the delegates' account of what took place at the conference:—

The company consisted of Gapon, with two adherents and five Social Democrats. All sat round a table, and the conversation began. Gapon is a good-looking man, with dark complexion and thoughtful, sympathetic face. He is evidently very tired, and, like the other orators, he is hoarse. To the questions addressed to him, he replies: "The masses are at present so electrified that you may lead them wherever you like. We shall go on Sunday to the Palace, and present a petition. If we are allowed to pass without hindrance, we shall march to the Palace Square, and summon the Tsar from Tsárskoe Selô. We shall wait for him till the evening. When he arrives, I shall go to him with a deputation, and in presenting to him the petition, I shall say: 'Your Majesty! Things cannot go on like this; it is time to give the people liberty. (*Tak nelzyá! Pará dat' narôdu svobôdu*). If he consents, we shall insist that he takes an oath before the people. Only then we shall come away, and when we begin to work, it will only be for eight hours a day. If, on the other hand, we are prevented from entering the city, we shall request and beg, and if they do not let us pass, we shall force our way. In the Palace Square we shall find troops, and we shall entreat them to come over to our side. If they beat us, we shall strike back. There will be sacrifices, but part of the troops will come over to us, and then, being ourselves strong in numbers, we shall make a revolution. We shall construct barricades, pillage the armourers' shops, break open the prisons, and seize the telephones and telegraphs. The Socialist-Revolutionaries have promised us bombs, and the Democrats money: and we shall be victorious!" *

* This confirms the information which comes to me from other quarters that Gapon was already in friendly relations with other revolutionary groups.

Such, in a few words, were the ideas which Gapon expounded. The impression he made on us was that he did not clearly realise where he was going. Acting with sincerity, he was ready to die, but he was convinced that the troops would not fire, and that the deputation would be received by the Emperor. He did not distinguish between different methods. Though not at all a partisan of violent means, he had become infuriated against autocracy and the Tsar, as was shown by his language when he said: 'If that blockhead of a Tsar comes out (*Yesli etot durák Tsar vuidet*). . . Burning with the desire to attain his object, he looked on revolution like a child, as if it could be accomplished in a day with empty hands!

Knowing that no previous preparations had been made for a revolution such as Gapon talked of, the Social Democratic agents tried to dissuade him from carrying out his idea on Sunday, but he stood firm. He had already committed himself publicly to the project. At a workmen's meeting in another quarter (Vassilióstrof) earlier in the day he had explained the petition, and said: "Let us go to the Winter Palace and summon the Emperor, and let us tell him our wants; if he does not listen to us we do not require him any longer." To a Social Democrat who shook him warmly by the hand and expressed his astonishment that there should be such a man among the clergy, he replied: "I am no longer a priest; I am a fighter for liberty! They want to exile me, and for some nights I have not slept at home." When offered assistance to escape arrest, he answered laconically: "Thanks; I have already a place of refuge." After his departure from the meeting, one of his friends, to whom he had confided a copy of the petition, rose and said: "Now has arrived the great historical moment! Now we can and must demand rights and liberty!" After hearing the petition read, the meeting decided that if the Tsar did not come out at the demand of the people strong measures should be taken, and one orator indicated pretty plainly what they

should be: "We don't require a Tsar who is deaf to the woes of the people; we shall perish ourselves, but we shall kill him! Swear that you will all come to the Palace on Sunday at twelve o'clock!" The audience raised their hands in token of assent.

Finding it impossible to dissuade Gapon from his purpose, the Social Democrats told him that they would take advantage of the circumstances independently, and that if he was allowed to enter the city with his deputation they would organise monster meetings in the Palace Square.

The imperious tone used by Gapon at the public meetings and private consultations was adopted by him also in his letters to the Minister of the Interior and the Emperor. To the former he wrote:—

"The workmen and inhabitants of St. Petersburg of various classes desire to see the Tsar at two o'clock on Sunday in the Winter Palace Square, in order to lay before him personally their needs and those of the whole Russian people. . . . Tell the Tsar that I and the workmen, many thousands in number, have peacefully, with confidence in him, but irrevocably, resolved to proceed to the Winter Palace. Let him show his confidence by deeds, and not by manifestoes."

To the Tsar himself his language was not more respectful:—

"Sovereign,—I fear the Ministers have not told you the truth about the situation. The whole people, trusting in you, has resolved to appear at the Winter Palace at two o'clock in the afternoon, in order to inform you of its needs. If you hesitate, and do not appear before the people, then you sever the moral bonds between you and them. Trust in you will disappear, because innocent blood will flow. Appear to-morrow before your people and receive our address of devotion in a courageous spirit! I and the labour-representatives, my brave comrades, guarantee the inviolability of your person."

Gapon was no longer merely the president of the Workmen's Union: inebriated with the excitement he had done so much to create, he now imagined himself the representative of the oppressed Russian people

and the heroic leader of a great political revolution. In the petition which he had prepared he said little about the grievances of the St. Petersburg workmen whose interests he had a right to advocate, and preferred to soar into much higher regions :—

"The bureaucracy has brought the country to the verge of ruin, and, by a shameful war, is bringing it to its downfall. We have no voice in the heavy burdens imposed on us; we do not even know for whom or why this money is wrung from the impoverished people, and we do not know how it is expended. This state of things is contrary to the Divine laws, and renders life unbearable. Assembled before your palace, we plead for our salvation. Refuse not your aid; raise your people from the tomb, and give them the means of working out their own destiny. Rescue them from the intolerable yoke of officialdom; throw down the wall that separates you from them, in order that they may rule with you the country that was created for their happiness—a happiness which is being wrenched from us, leaving us nothing but sorrow and humiliation."

With an innate sentiment of autocratic dignity the Emperor declined to obey the imperious summons, and he thereby avoided an unseemly altercation with the excited priest, as well as the boisterous public meetings which the Social Democrats were preparing to hold in the Palace Square. Orders were given to the police and the troops to prevent the crowds of workmen from penetrating into the centre of the city from the industrial suburbs. The rest need not be described in detail. On Sunday the crowds tried to force their way, the troops fired, and many of the demonstrators were killed or wounded. How many it is impossible to say; between the various estimates there is an enormous discrepancy. At one of the first volleys Father Gapon fell, but he turned out to be quite unhurt, and was spirited away to his place of refuge, whence he escaped across the frontier.

As soon as he had an opportunity of giving public expression to his feelings, he indulged in very strong

language. In his letters and proclamations the Tsar is called a miscreant and an assassin, and is described as traitorous, bloodthirsty, and bestial. To the Ministers he is equally uncomplimentary. They appear to him an accursed band of brigands, Mamelukes, jackals, monsters. Against the Tsar, "with his reptilian brood," and the Ministers alike, he vows vengeance—"Death to them all!" As for the means for realising his sacred mission, he recommends bombs, dynamite, individual and wholesale terrorism, popular insurrection, and paralysing the life of the cities by destroying the water mains, the gas pipes, the telegraph and telephone wires, the railways and tramways, the Government buildings and the prisons. At some moments he seems to imagine himself invested with papal powers, for he anathematises the soldiers who did their duty on the eventful day, whilst he blesses and absolves from their oath of allegiance those who help the nation to win liberty.

So far I have spoken merely of the main currents in the revolutionary movement. Of the minor currents—particularly those in the outlying provinces, where the Socialist tendencies are mingled with nationalist feeling—I shall have occasion to speak when I come to deal with the present political situation as a whole. Meanwhile, I wish to sketch in outline the foreign policy which has powerfully contributed to bring about the present crisis.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION AND FOREIGN POLICY.

Rapid Growth of Russia—Expansive Tendency of Agricultural Peoples—The Russo-Slavonians—The Northern Forest and the Steppe—Colonisation—The Part of the Government in the Process of Expansion—Expansion towards the West—Growth of the Empire represented in a Tabular Form—Commercial Motive for Expansion—The Expansive Force in the Future—Possibilities of Expansion in Europe—Persia, Afghanistan, and India—Trans-Siberian Railway and *Weltpolitik*—A Grandiose Scheme—Determined Opposition of Japan—Negotiations and War—Russia's Imprudence Explained—Conclusion.

THE rapid growth of Russia is one of the most remarkable facts of modern history. An insignificant tribe, or collection of tribes, which, a thousand years ago, occupied a small district near the sources of the Dnieper and Western Dvina, has grown into a great nation with a territory stretching from the Baltic to the Northern Pacific, and from the Polar Ocean to the frontiers of Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and China. We have here a fact well deserving of investigation, and as the process is still going on and is commonly supposed to threaten our national interests, the investigation ought to have for us more than a mere scientific interest. What is the secret of this expansive power? Is it a mere barbarous lust of territorial aggrandisement, or is it some more reasonable motive? And what is the nature of the process? Is annexation followed by assimilation, or do the new acquisitions retain their old character? Is the Empire in its present extent a homogeneous whole, or merely a conglomeration of heterogeneous units held together by the outward bond of centralised administration? If we could find satisfactory answers

to these questions, we might determine how far Russia is strengthened or weakened by her annexations of territory, and might form some plausible conjectures as to how, when, and where the process of expansion is to stop.

By glancing at her history from the economic point of view we may easily detect one prominent cause of expansion.

An agricultural people, employing merely the primitive methods of agriculture, has always a strong tendency to widen its borders. The natural increase of population demands a constantly increasing production of grain, whilst the primitive methods of cultivation exhaust the soil and steadily diminish its productivity. With regard to this stage of economic development, the modest assertion of Malthus, that the supply of food does not increase so rapidly as the population, often falls far short of the truth. As the population increases, the supply of food may decrease not only relatively, but absolutely. When a people finds itself in this critical position, it must adopt one of two alternatives: either it must prevent the increase of population, or it must increase the production of food. In the former case it may legalise the custom of "exposing" infants, as was done in ancient Greece; or it may regularly sell a large portion of the young women and children, as used to be done in Circassia; or the surplus population may emigrate to foreign lands, as the Scandinavians did in the ninth century, and as we ourselves are doing in a more peaceable fashion at the present day. The other alternative may be effected either by extending the area of cultivation or by improving the system of agriculture.

The Russo-Slavonians, being an agricultural people, experienced this difficulty, but for them it was not

serious. A convenient way of escape was plainly indicated by their peculiar geographical position. They were not hemmed in by lofty mountains or stormy seas. To the south and east—at their very doors, as it were—lay a boundless expanse of thinly populated virgin soil, awaiting the labour of the husbandman, and ready to repay it most liberally. The peasantry, therefore, instead of exposing their infants, selling their daughters, or sweeping the seas as Vikings, simply spread out towards the east and south. This was at once the most natural and the wisest course, for of all the expedients for preserving the equilibrium between population and food-production, increasing the area of cultivation is, under the circumstances just described, the easiest and most effective. Theoretically the same result might have been obtained by improving the method of agriculture, but practically this was impossible. Intensive culture is not likely to be adopted so long as expansion is easy. High farming is a thing to be proud of when there is a scarcity of land, but it would be absurd to attempt it where there is abundance of virgin soil in the vicinity.

The process of expansion, thus produced by purely economic causes, was accelerated by influences of another kind, especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The increase in the number of officials, the augmentation of the taxes, the merciless exactions of the *Voyevods* and their subordinates, the transformation of the peasants and "free wandering people" into serfs, the ecclesiastical reforms and consequent persecution of the schismatics, the frequent conscriptions and violent reforms of Peter the Great, these and other kinds of oppression made thousands flee from their homes and seek a refuge in the free territory, where there were no officials, no tax-gatherers, and no proprietors. But the State, with its

army of tax-gatherers and officials, followed close on the heels of the fugitives, and those who wished to preserve their liberty had to advance still further. Notwithstanding the efforts of the authorities to retain the population in the localities actually occupied, the wave of colonisation moved steadily onwards.

The vast territory which lay open to the colonists consisted of two contiguous regions, separated from each other by no mountains or rivers, but widely differing from each other in many respects. The one, comprising all the northern part of Eastern Europe and of Asia, even unto Kamtchatka, may be roughly described as a land of forests, intersected by many rivers, and containing numerous lakes and marshes; the other, stretching southwards to the Black Sea, and eastwards far away into Central Asia, is for the most part what Russians call "the Steppe," and Americans would call the prairies.

Each of these two regions presented peculiar inducements and peculiar obstacles to colonisation. So far as the facility of raising grain was concerned, the southern region was decidedly preferable. In the north the soil had little natural fertility, and was covered with dense forests, so that much time and labour had to be expended in making a clearing before the seed could be sown.* In the south, on the contrary, the squatter had no trees to fell, and no clearing to make. Nature had cleared the land for him, and supplied him with a rich black soil of marvellous fertility, which has not yet been exhausted by centuries of cultivation. Why, then, did the peasant often prefer the northern forests to the fertile Steppe where the land was already prepared for him?

For this apparent inconsistency there was a good

* The *modus operandi* has been already described; *vide* Vol. I., p. 145 *et seq.*

and valid reason. The muzhik had not, even in those good old times, any passionate love of labour for its own sake, nor was he by any means insensible to the facilities for agriculture afforded by the Steppe. But he could not regard the subject exclusively from the agricultural point of view. He had to take into consideration the fauna as well as the flora of the two regions. At the head of the fauna in the northern forests stood the peace-loving, laborious Finnish tribes, little disposed to molest settlers who did not make themselves obnoxiously aggressive; on the Steppe lived the predatory, nomadic hordes, ever ready to attack, plunder, and carry off as slaves the peaceful agricultural population. These facts, as well as the agricultural conditions, were known to intending colonists, and influenced them in their choice of a new home. Though generally fearless and fatalistic in a high degree, they could not entirely overlook the dangers of the Steppe, and many of them preferred to encounter the hard work of the forest region.

These differences in the character and population of the two regions determined the character of the colonisation. Though the colonisation of the northern regions was not effected entirely without bloodshed, it was, on the whole, of a peaceful kind, and consequently received little attention from the contemporary chroniclers. The colonisation of the Steppe, on the contrary, required the help of the Cossacks, and forms, as I have already shown, one of the bloodiest pages of European history.

Thus, we see, the process of expansion towards the north, east, and south may be described as a spontaneous movement of the agricultural population. It must, however, be admitted that this is an imperfect and one-sided representation of the phenomenon. Though the initiative unquestionably came from the

people, the Government played an important part in the movement.

In early times when Russia was merely a conglomeration of independent principalities, the princes were under the moral and political obligation of protecting their subjects, and this obligation coincided admirably with their natural desire to extend their dominions. When the Grand Princes of Muscovy, in the fifteenth century, united the numerous principalities and proclaimed themselves Tsars, they accepted this obligation for the whole country, and conceived much grander schemes of territorial aggrandisement. Towards the north and north-east no strenuous efforts were required. The Republic of Novgorod easily gained possession of Northern Russia as far as the Ural Mountains, and Siberia was conquered by a small band of Cossacks without the authorisation of Muscovy, so that the Tsars had merely to annex the already conquered territory. In the southern region the part played by the Government was very different. The agricultural population had to be constantly protected along a frontier of enormous length, lying open at all points to the incursions of nomadic tribes. To prevent raids it was necessary to keep up a military cordon, and this means did not always ensure protection to those living near the frontier. The nomads often came in formidable hordes, which could be successfully resisted only by large armies, and sometimes the armies were not large enough to cope with them. Again and again during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Tartar hordes swept over the country—burning the villages and towns, and spreading devastation wherever they appeared—and during more than two centuries Russia had to pay a heavy tribute to the Khans.

Gradually the Tsars threw off this galling yoke.

Ivan the Terrible annexed the three Khanates of the Lower Volga—Kazán, Kiptchák, and Astrakhan—and in that way removed the danger of a foreign domination. But permanent protection was not thereby secured to the outlying provinces. The nomadic tribes living near the frontier continued their raids, and in the slave markets of the Crimea the living merchandise was supplied by Russia and Poland.

To protect an open frontier against the incursions of nomadic tribes three methods are possible: the construction of a great wall, the establishment of a strong military cordon, and the permanent subjugation of the marauders. The first of these expedients, adopted by the Romans in Britain and by the Chinese on their north-western frontier, is enormously expensive, and was utterly impossible in a country like Southern Russia, where there is no stone for building purposes; the second was constantly tried, and constantly found wanting; the third alone proved practicable and efficient. Though the Government has long since recognised that the acquisition of barren, thinly populated Steppes is a burden rather than an advantage, it has been induced to go on making annexations for the purpose of self defence, as well as for other reasons.

In consequence of this active part which the Government took in the extension of the territory, the process of political expansion sometimes got greatly ahead of the colonisation. After the Turkish wars and consequent annexations in the time of Catherine II., for example, a great part of Southern Russia was almost uninhabited, and the deficiency had to be corrected, as we have seen, by organised emigration. At the present day, in the Asiatic provinces, there are still immense tracts of unoccupied land, some of which are being gradually colonised.

If we turn now from the East to the West we shall find that the expansion in this direction was of an entirely different kind. The country lying to the westward of the early Russo-Slavonian settlements had a poor soil and a comparatively dense population, and consequently held out little inducement to immigration. Besides this, it was inhabited by warlike agricultural races, who were not only capable of defending their own territory, but even strongly disposed to make encroachments on their eastern neighbours. Russian expansion to the westward was, therefore, not a spontaneous movement of the agricultural population, but the work of the Government, acting slowly and laboriously by means of diplomacy and military force; it had, however, a certain historical justification.

No sooner had Russia freed herself, in the fifteenth century, from the Tartar domination than her political independence, and even her national existence, were threatened from the West. Her western neighbours were, like herself, animated with that tendency to national expansion which I have above described; and for a time it seemed doubtful who should ultimately possess the vast plains of Eastern Europe. The chief competitors were the Tsars of Muscovy and the Kings of Poland, and the latter appeared to have the better chance. In close connection with Western Europe, they had been able to adopt many of the improvements which had recently been made in the art of war, and they already possessed the rich valley of the Dnieper. Once, with the help of the free Cossacks, they succeeded in overrunning the whole of Muscovy, and a son of the Polish king was elected Tsar in Moscow. By attempting to accomplish their purpose in too hasty and reckless a fashion, they raised a storm of religious and patriotic fanaticism, which very soon drove them out of their newly acquired

possessions. The country remained, however, in a very precarious position, and its more intelligent rulers perceived plainly that, in order to carry on the struggle successfully, they must import something of that Western civilisation which gave such an advantage to their opponents.

Some steps had already been taken in that direction. In the year 1553, an English navigator, whilst seeking for a short route to China and India, had accidentally discovered the port of Archangel on the White Sea, and since that time the Tsars had kept up an intermittent diplomatic and commercial intercourse with England. But this route was at all times tedious and dangerous, and during a great part of the year it was closed by the ice. In view of these difficulties the Tsars tried to import "cunning foreign artificers," by way of the Baltic; but their efforts were hampered by the Livonian Order, who at that time held the east coast, and who considered, like the Europeans on the coast of Africa at the present day, that the barbarous natives of the interior should not be supplied with arms and ammunition. All the other routes to the West traversed likewise the territory of rivals, who might at any time become avowed enemies. Under these circumstances the Tsars naturally desired to break through the barrier which hemmed them in, and the acquisition of the eastern coast of the Baltic became one of the chief objects of Russia's foreign policy.

After Poland, Russia's most formidable rival was Sweden. That Power early acquired a large amount of territory to the east of the Baltic—including the mouths of the Neva, where St. Petersburg now stands—and long harboured ambitious schemes of further conquest. In the troublous times when the Poles overran the Tsardom of Muscovy, she took advan-

tage of the occasion to annex a considerable amount of territory, and her expansion in this direction went on in intermittent fashion until it was finally stopped by Peter the Great.

In comparison with these two rivals Russia was weak in all that regarded the art of war; but she had two immense advantages: she had a very large population, and a strong, stable Government that could concentrate the national forces for any definite purpose. All that she required for success in the competition was an army on the European model. Peter the Great created such an army, and won the prize. After this the political disintegration of Poland proceeded rapidly, and when that unhappy country fell to pieces, Russia naturally took for herself the lion's share of the spoil. Sweden, too, sank to political insignificance, and gradually lost all her trans-Baltic possessions. The last of them—the Grand Duchy of Finland, which stretches from the Gulf of Finland to the Polar Ocean—was ceded to Russia by the peace of Friederichshamm in 1809.

The territorial extent of all these acquisitions will be best shown in a tabular form. The following table represents the process of expansion from the time when Ivan III. united the independent principalities and threw off the Tartar yoke, down to the accession of Peter the Great in 1682:—

	English Sq. Miles.
In 1505 the Tsardom of Muscovy contained about	784,000
„ 1533 „ „ „ „	996,000
„ 1584 „ „ „ „	2,650,000
„ 1598 „ „ „ „	3,328,000
„ 1676 „ „ „ „	5,448,000
„ 1682 „ „ „ „	5,618,000

Of these 5,618,000 English square miles about 1,696,000 were in Europe and about 3,922,000 in Asia.

Peter the Great, though famous as a conqueror, did not annex nearly so much territory as many of his predecessors and successors. At his death, in 1725, the Empire contained, in round numbers, 1,738,000 square miles in Europe and 4,092,000 in Asia. The following table* shows the subsequent expansion:—

	In Europe and the Caucasus Eng. sq. m.	In Asia. Eng. sq. m.
In 1725 the Russian Empire contained about	1,738,000 ...	4,092,000
„ 1770 „ „ „ „	1,780,000 ...	4,452,000
„ 1800 „ „ „ „	2,014,000 ...	4,452,000
„ 1825 „ „ „ „	2,226,000 ...	4,452,000
„ 1855 „ „ „ „	2,261,250 ...	5,194,000
„ 1867 „ „ „ „	2,267,360 ...	5,267,560
„ 1897 „ „ „ „	2,267,360 ...	6,382,321

When once Russia has annexed she does not readily relax her grasp. She has, however, since the death of Peter the Great, on four occasions ceded territory which had come into her possession. To Persia she ceded, in 1729, Mazanderan and Astrabad, and in 1735 a large portion of the Caucasus; in 1856, by the Treaty of Paris, she gave up the mouths of the Danube and part of Bessarabia; in 1867 she sold to the United States her American possessions; in 1881 she retroceded to China the greater part of Kuldja, which she had occupied for ten years; and now she is releasing her hold on Manchuria under the pressure of Japan.

The increase in the population—due in part to territorial acquisitions—since 1722, when the first census was taken, has been as follows:—

* In this table is not included the territory in the North-West of America—containing about 513,250 English square miles—which was annexed to Russia in 1799 and ceded to the United States in 1867.

In	1722	the Empire	contained	about	14 million inhabitants.
„	1742	„	„	„	16 „
„	1762	„	„	„	19 „
„	1782	„	„	„	28 „
„	1796	„	„	„	36 „
„	1812	„	„	„	41 „
„	1815	„	„	„	45 „
„	1835	„	„	„	60 „
„	1851	„	„	„	68 „
„	1858	„	„	„	74 „
„	1897	„	„	„	129 „

So much for the past. To sum up, we may say that, if we have read Russian history aright, the chief motives of expansion have been spontaneous colonisation, self-defence against nomadic tribes, and high political aims, such as the desire to reach the sea-coast; and that the process has been greatly facilitated by peculiar geographical conditions and the autocratic form of government. Before passing to the future, I must mention another cause of expansion which has recently come into play, and which has already acquired very great importance.

Russia is rapidly becoming, as I have explained in a previous chapter, a great industrial and commercial nation, and is anxious to acquire new markets for her manufactured goods. Though her industries cannot yet supply her own wants, she likes to peg out claims for the future, so as not to be forestalled by more advanced nations. I am not sure that she ever makes a conquest exclusively for this purpose, but whenever it happens that she has other reasons for widening her borders, the idea of acquiring commercial advantages acts as a subsidiary incentive, and as soon as the territory is annexed she raises round it a line of commercial fortifications in the shape of custom-houses, through which foreign goods have great difficulty in forcing their way.

This policy is quite intelligible from the patriotic point of view, but Russians like to justify it, and condemn English competition, on higher grounds. England, they say, is like a successful manufacturer who has outstripped his rivals and who seeks to prevent any new competitors from coming into the field. By her mercantile policy she has become the great blood-sucker of other nations. Having no cause to fear competition, she advocates the insidious principles of Free Trade, and deluges foreign countries with her manufactures to such an extent that unprotected native industries are inevitably ruined. Thus all nations have long paid tribute to England, but the era of emancipation has dawned. The fallacies of Free Trade have been detected and exposed, and Russia, like other nations, has found in the beneficent power of protective tariffs a means of escape from British economic thraldom. Henceforth, not only the muzhiks of European Russia, but also the populations of Central Asia, will be saved from the heartless exploitation of Manchester and Birmingham—and be handed over, I presume, to the tender mercies of the manufacturers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, who sell their goods much dearer than their English rivals.

Having thus analysed the expansive tendency, let us endeavour to determine how the various factors of which it is composed are acting in the present and are likely to act in the future. In this investigation it will be well to begin with the simpler and proceed gradually to the more complex parts of the problem.

Towards the north and the west the history of Russian expansion may almost be regarded as closed. Northwards there is nothing to be annexed but the Arctic Ocean and the Polar regions; and westwards, annexations at the expense of Germany are not to be

thought of. There remain, therefore, only Sweden and Norway. They may possibly, at some future time, come within the range of Russia's territorial appetite, but at present the only part of the Scandinavian Peninsula on which she is supposed to cast longing eyes is a barren district in the extreme north, which is said to contain several excellent warm-water ports.

Towards the south-west there are possibilities of future expansion, and already some people talk of Austrian Galicia being geographically and ethnographically a part of Russia; but so long as the Austro-Hungarian Empire holds together, such possibilities do not come within the sphere of practical politics.

Farther east, towards the Balkan Peninsula, the expansive tendency is much more complicated and of very ancient date. The Russo-Slavs who held the valley of the Dnieper from the ninth to the thirteenth century belonged to those numerous frontier tribes which the tottering Byzantine Empire attempted to ward off by diplomacy and rich gifts, and by giving to the troublesome chiefs, on condition of their accepting Christianity, princesses of the Imperial family as brides. Vladimir, Prince of Kief, now recognised as a Saint by the Russian Church, accepted Christianity in this way (A.D. 988), and his subjects followed his example. Russia thus became ecclesiastically a part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the people learned to regard Tsargrad—that is, the City of the Tsar, as the Byzantine Emperor was then called—with peculiar veneration.

All through the long Tartar domination, when the nomadic hordes held the valley of the Dnieper and formed a barrier between Russia and the Balkan

Peninsula, the capital of the Greek Orthodox world was remembered and venerated by the Russian people, and in the fifteenth century it acquired in their eyes a new significance. At that time the relative positions of Constantinople and Moscow were changed. Constantinople fell under the power of the Mahometan Turks, whilst Moscow threw off the yoke of the Mahometan Tartars, the northern representatives of the Turkish race. The Grand Prince of Moscow thereby became the Protector of the Faith, and in some sort the successor of the Byzantine Tsars. To strengthen this claim, Ivan III. married a niece of the last Byzantine Emperor, and his successors went further in the same direction by assuming the title of Tsar, and inventing a fable about their ancestor Rurik having been a descendant of Cæsar Augustus.

All this would seem to a lawyer, or even to a diplomatist, a very shadowy title, and none of the Russian monarchs—except, perhaps, Catherine II., who conceived the project of resuscitating the Byzantine Empire, and caused one of her grandsons to learn modern Greek, in view of possible contingencies—ever thought seriously of claiming the imaginary heritage; but the idea that the Tsars ought to reign in Tsargrad, and that St. Sophia, polluted by Moslem abominations, should be restored to the Orthodox Christians, struck deep root in the minds of the Russian people, and is still by no means extinct. As soon as serious disturbances break out in the East, the peasantry begin to think that perhaps the time has come for undertaking a crusade for the recovery of the Holy City on the Bosphorus, and for the liberation of their brethren in the faith, who groan under Turkish bondage.

Essentially different from this religious sentiment,

but often blended with it, is a vague feeling of racial affinity, which has long existed among the various Slav nationalities, and which was greatly developed during last century by writers of the Panslavist school. When Germans and Italians were striving after political independence and unity, it naturally occurred to the Slavs that they might do likewise. The idea became popular among the Slav subject-nationalities of Austria and Turkey, and it awoke a certain amount of enthusiasm in Moscow, where it was hoped that "all the Slav streams would unite in the great Russian Sea." It required no great political perspicacity to foresee that in any confederation of Slav nationalities, the hegemony must necessarily devolve on Russia, the only Slav State which has succeeded in becoming a Great Power.

Those two currents of national feeling ran parallel to, and intermingled with, the policy of the Government. Desirous of becoming a great naval Power, Russia has always striven to reach the sea-coast and obtain good harbours. In the north and north-west she succeeded in a certain degree, but neither the White Sea nor the Baltic satisfied her requirements, and she naturally turned her eyes to the Mediterranean. With difficulty she gained possession of the northern shores of the Black Sea, but her designs were thereby only half realised, because the Turks held the only outlet to the Mediterranean, and could effectually blockade, so far as the open sea is concerned, all her Black Sea ports, without employing a single ship of war. Thus the possession of the Straits, involving necessarily the possession of Constantinople, became a cardinal point of Russia's foreign policy. Any description of the various methods adopted by her at different times for the attainment of this end does not enter into my present programme,

but I may say briefly that the action of the three factors above mentioned—the religious feeling, the Panslavist sentiment, and the political aims—has never been better exemplified than in the last struggle with Turkey, culminating in the Treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin.

For all classes in Russia the result of that struggle was a feeling of profound disappointment. The peasantry bewailed the fact that the Crescent on St. Sophia had not been replaced by the Cross; the Slavophil patriots were indignant that the "little brothers" had shown themselves unworthy of the generous efforts and sacrifices made on their behalf, and that a portion of the future Slav confederation had passed under the domination of Austria; and the Government recognised that the acquisition of the Straits must be indefinitely postponed. Then history repeated itself. After the Crimean War, in accordance with Prince Gortchakoff's famous epigram, *La Russie ne boude pas, elle se recueille*, the Government had for some years abandoned an active policy in Europe, and devoted itself to the work of internal reorganisation; whilst the military party had turned their attention to making new acquisitions of territory and influence in Asia. In like manner, after the Turkish campaign of 1877-78, Alexander III., turning his back on the Slav brethren, inaugurated an era of peace in Europe, and of territorial expansion in the East. In this direction the expansive force was not affected by religious feeling, or Panslavist sentiment, and was controlled and guided by purely political considerations. It is consequently much easier to determine in this field of action what the political aims really are.

In Asia, as in Europe, the dominant factor in the policy of the Government has been the desire to reach

the sea-coast; and in both continents, the ports first acquired were in northern latitudes where the coasts are free from ice during only a part of the year. In this respect, Nikolaefsk and Vladivostock in the Far East correspond to Archangel and St. Petersburg in Europe. Such ports could not fulfil all the requirements, and consequently the expansive tendency turned southwards—in Europe towards the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and in Asia towards the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Pechili.

In Persia the Russian Government pursues the policy of pacific infiltration, and already the northern half of the Shah's dominions is pretty well permeated with Russian influence, commercial and political. In the southern half the infiltration is to some extent checked by physical obstacles and British influence, but it is steadily advancing, and the idea of obtaining a port on the Persian Gulf is coming within the range of practical politics.

In Afghanistan also the pressure is felt, and here too, the expansive tendency meets with opposition from England. More than once the two great Powers have come dangerously near to war—notably in 1885, at the moment of the Penjdeh incident, when the British Parliament voted £11,000,000 for military preparations. Fortunately on that occasion the problem was solved by diplomacy. The northern frontier of Afghanistan was demarcated by a joint commission, and an agreement was come to by which this line should form the boundary of the British and Russian spheres of influence. For some years Russia scrupulously respected this agreement, but during our South African difficulties she showed symptoms of departing from it, and at one moment orders were issued from St. Petersburg for a military demonstration

on the Afghan frontier. Strange to say, the military authorities, who are usually very bellicose, deprecated such a movement, on the ground that a military demonstration in a country like Afghanistan might easily develop into a serious campaign, and that a serious campaign ought not to be undertaken in that region until after the completion of the strategical railway from Orenburg to Tashkent.

As this important line has now been completed, and other strategic lines are in contemplation, the question arises whether Russia meditates an attack on India. It is a question which is not easily answered. No doubt there are many Russians who think it would be a grand thing to annex our Indian Empire, with its teeming millions and its imaginary fabulous treasures, and not a few young officers suppose that it would be an easy task. Further, it is certain that the problem of an invasion has been studied by the Headquarters Staff in St. Petersburg, just as the problem of an invasion of England has been studied by the Headquarters Staff in Berlin. It may be pretty safely asserted, however, that the idea of a conquest of India has never been seriously entertained in the Russian official world. What has been seriously entertained, not only in the official world, but by the Government itself, is the idea—strongly recommended by the late General Skobelef—that Russia should, as quickly as possible, get within striking distance of our Indian possessions, so that she may always be able to bring strong diplomatic pressure on the British Government, and in the event of a conflict immobilise a large part of the British army.

The expansive tendency in the direction of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean was considerably weakened by the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and the rapid development of a forward

policy in the Far East. Never, perhaps, has the construction of a single line produced such deep and lasting changes in the sphere of *Weltpolitik*.

As soon as the Trans-Siberian Railway was being rapidly constructed, a magnificent prospect opened up to the gaze of imaginative politicians in St. Petersburg. The foreground was Manchuria, a region of 364,000 square miles, endowed by nature with enormous mineral resources, and presenting a splendid field for agricultural colonisation and commercial enterprise. Beyond was seen Korea, geographically an appendix of Manchuria, possessing splendid harbours, and occupied by an effete, unwarlike population, wholly incapable of resisting a European Power. That was quite enough to inflame the imagination of patriotic Russians; but there was something more, dimly perceived in the background. Once in possession of Manchuria, supplied with a network of railways, Russia would dominate Peking and the whole of Northern China, and she would thus be able to play a decisive part in the approaching struggle of the European Powers for the Far Eastern Sick Man's inheritance.

Of course, there were obstacles in the way of realising this grandiose scheme, and there were some cool heads in St. Petersburg who were not slow to point them out. In the first place the undertaking must be extremely costly, and the economic condition of Russia proper was not such as to justify the expenditure of an enormous capital which must be for many years unproductive. Any superfluous capital which the country might possess was much more urgently required for purposes of internal development, and the impoverished agricultural population ought not to be drained of their last meagre reserves for the sake of gigantic political schemes which did

not directly contribute to their material welfare. To this the enthusiastic advocates of the forward policy replied that the national finances had never been in such a prosperous condition, that the revenue was increasing by leaps and bounds, that the money invested in the proposed enterprise would soon be repaid with interest; and that if Russia did not at once seize the opportunity she would find herself forestalled by energetic rivals.

There was still, however, one formidable objection. Such an enormous increase of Russia's power in the Far East would inevitably arouse the jealousy and opposition of other Powers, especially of Japan, for whom the future of Korea and Manchuria was a question of life and death. Here again the advocates of the forward policy had their answer ready. They declared that the danger was more apparent than real. In Far Eastern diplomacy the European Powers could not compete with Russia, and they might easily be bought off by giving them a very modest share of the spoil; as for Japan, she was not formidable, for she was just emerging from Oriental barbarism, and all her boasted progress was nothing more than a thin veneer of European civilisation. As the Moscow patriots on the eve of the Crimean War said contemptuously of the Allies, "We have only to throw our hats at them," so now the believers in Russia's historic mission in the Far East spoke of their future opponents as "monkeys" and "parrots."

The war between China and Japan in 1894-5, terminating in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which ceded to Japan the Liaotung Peninsula, showed Russia that if she was not to be forestalled she must be up and doing. She accordingly formed a coalition with France and Germany, and compelled Japan to withdraw from the mainland, on the pretext that the

integrity of China must be maintained. In this way China recovered, for a moment, a bit of lost territory, and further benefits were conferred on her by a guarantee for a foreign loan, and by the creation of the Russo-Chinese Bank, which would assist her in her financial affairs. For these and other favours she was expected to be grateful, and it was suggested to her that her gratitude might take the form of facilitating the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. If constructed wholly on Russian territory the line would have to make an enormous bend to the northward, whereas if it went straight from Lake Baikal to Vladivostock it would be very much shorter, and would confer a very great benefit on the North-Eastern provinces of the Celestial Empire. This benefit, moreover, might be greatly increased by making a branch line to Talienwan and Port Arthur, which would some day be united with Peking. Gradually Li-Hung-Chang and other influential Chinese officials were induced to sympathise with the scheme, and a permission was granted for the direct line to Vladivostock through Chinese territory.

The retrocession of the Liaotung Peninsula had not been effected by Russia alone. Germany and France had co-operated, and they also expected from China a mark of gratitude in some tangible form. On this point the statesmen of Berlin held very strong views, and they thought it advisable to obtain a material guarantee for the fulfilment of their expectations by seizing Kiaochau, on the ground that German missionaries had been murdered by Chinese fanatics.

For Russia this was a most unwelcome incident. She had earmarked Kiaochau for her own purposes, and had already made an agreement with the authorities in Peking that the harbour might be used freely by her fleet. And this was not the

worst. The incident might inaugurate an era of partition for which she was not yet prepared, and another port which she had earmarked for her own use might be seized by a rival. Already English ships of war were reported to be prowling about in the vicinity of the Liaotung Peninsula. She hastened to demand, therefore, as a set-off for the loss of Kiao-chau, a lease of Port Arthur and Talienwan, and a railway concession to unite these ports with her Trans-Siberian Railway. The Chinese Government was too weak to think of refusing the demands, and the process of gradually absorbing Manchuria began, in accordance with a plan already roughly sketched out in St. Petersburg.

In the light of a few authentic documents and many subsequent events, the outline of this plan can be traced with tolerable accuracy. In the region through which the projected railways were to run there was a large marauding population, and consequently the labourers and the works would have to be protected; and as Chinese troops can never be thoroughly relied on, the protecting force must be Russian. Under this rather transparent disguise a small army of occupation could be gradually introduced, and in establishing a *modus vivendi* between it and the Chinese civil and military authorities, a predominant influence in the local administration could be established. At the same time, by energetic diplomatic action at Peking, which would be brought within striking-distance by the railways, all rival foreign influences might be excluded from the occupied provinces, and the rest might be left to the action of "spontaneous infiltration." Thus, while professing to uphold the principle of the territorial integrity of the Celestial Empire, the Cabinet of St. Petersburg might practically annex the whole of Manchuria, and

transform Port Arthur into a great naval port and arsenal, a far more effectual "Dominator of the East" than Vladivostock, which was intended, as its name implies, to fulfil that function. From Manchuria the political influence and the spontaneous infiltration would naturally extend to Korea, and on the deeply indented coast of the Hermit Kingdom new ports and arsenals, far more spacious and strategically more important than Port Arthur, might be constructed.

The grandiose scheme was carefully laid, and for a time it was favoured by circumstances. In 1900 the Boxer troubles justified Russia in sending a large force into Manchuria, and enabled her subsequently to play the part of China's protector against the inordinate demands of the Western Powers for compensation and guarantees. For a moment it seemed as if the slow process of gradual infiltration might be replaced by a more expeditious mode of annexation. As the dexterous diplomacy of Ignatief in 1858 had induced the Son of Heaven to cede to Russia the rich Primorsk provinces between the Amur and the sea, as compensation for Russian protection against the English and French, who had burnt his Summer Palace, so his successor might now perhaps be induced to cede Manchuria to the Tsar for similar reasons.

No such cession actually took place, but the Russian diplomatists in Peking could use the gratitude argument in support of their demands for an extension of the rights and privileges of the "temporary" occupation; and when China sought to resist the pressure by leaning on the rival Powers she found them to be little better than broken reeds. France could not openly oppose her ally, and Germany had reasons of her own for conciliating the Tsar, whilst England and the United States, though avowedly opposing the scheme

as dangerous to their commercial interests, were not prepared to go to war in defence of their policy. It seemed, therefore, that by patience, tenacity and diplomatic dexterity Russia might ultimately attain her ends. But a surprise was in store for her. There was one Power which recognised that her own vital interests were at stake, and which was ready to undertake a life-and-death struggle in defence of them.

Though still smarting under the humiliation of her expulsion from the Liaotung Peninsula in 1895, and watching with the keenest interest every move in the political game, Japan had remained for some time in the background, and had confined her efforts to resisting Russian influence in Korea and supporting diplomatically the Powers who were upholding the policy of the open door. Now, when it had become evident that the Western Powers would not prevent the realisation of the Russian scheme, she determined to intervene energetically, and to stake her national existence on the result. Ever since 1895 she had been making military and naval preparations for the day of the *revanche*, and now that day was at hand. Against the danger of a coalition such as had checkmated her on the previous occasion she was protected by the alliance which she had concluded with England in 1902, and she felt confident that with Russia alone she was quite capable of dealing single-handed. Her position is briefly and graphically described in a despatch, telegraphed at that time (28th July, 1903) by the Japanese Government to its representative at St. Petersburg, instructing him to open negotiations :

"The recent conduct of Russia in making new demands at Peking and tightening her hold upon Manchuria has led the Imperial Government to believe that she must have abandoned her intention of retiring from that province. At the same time, her increased activity upon the Korean frontier is such as to raise

doubts as to the limits of her ambition. The unconditional and permanent occupation of Manchuria by Russia would create a state of things prejudicial to the security and interests of Japan. The principle of equal opportunity (the open door) would thereby be annulled, and the territorial integrity of China impaired. There is, however, a still more serious consideration for the Japanese Government. If Russia were established on the flank of Korea she would constantly menace the separate existence of that Empire, or at least exercise in it a predominant influence; and as Japan considers Korea an important outpost in her line of defence, she regards its independence as absolutely essential to her own repose and safety. Moreover, the political as well as commercial and industrial interests and influence which Japan possesses in Korea are paramount over those of other Powers; she cannot, having regard to her own security, consent to surrender them to, or share them with, another Power."

In accordance with this view of the situation, the Japanese Government informed Count Lamsdorff that, as it desired to remove from the relations of the two Empires every cause of future misunderstanding, it would be glad to enter with the Imperial Russian Government upon an examination of the condition of affairs in the Far East, with a view to defining the respective special interests of the two countries in those regions.

Though Count Lamsdorff accepted the proposal with apparent cordiality and professed to regard it as a means of preventing any outsider from sowing the seeds of discord between the two countries, the idea of a general discussion was not at all welcome. Careful definition of respective interests was the last thing the Russian Government desired. Its policy was to keep the whole situation in a haze until it had consolidated its position in Manchuria and on the Korean frontier to such an extent that it could dictate its own terms in any future arrangement. It could not, however, consistently with its oft-repeated declarations of disinterestedness and love of peace, decline to discuss

the subject. It consented, therefore, to an exchange of views, but in order to ensure that the tightening of its hold on the territories in question should proceed *pari passu* with the diplomatic action, it made an extraordinary departure from ordinary procedure, entrusting the conduct of the affair, not to Count Lamsdorff and the Foreign Office, but to Admiral Alexeyef, the newly created Viceroy of the Far East, in whom was vested the control of all civil, military, naval, and diplomatic affairs relating to that part of the world.

From the commencement of the negotiations, which lasted from August 12th, 1903, to February 6th, 1904, the irreconcilable differences of the two rivals became apparent, and all through the correspondence, in which a few apparent concessions were offered by Japan, neither Power retreated a step from the positions originally taken up. What Japan suggested was, roughly speaking, a mutual engagement to uphold the independence and integrity of the Chinese and Korean empires, and at the same time a bilateral arrangement by which the special interests of the two contracting parties in Manchuria and in Korea should be formally recognised, and the means of protecting them clearly defined. The scheme did not commend itself to the Russians. They systematically ignored the interests of Japan in Manchuria, and maintained that she had no right to interfere in any arrangements they might think fit to make with the Chinese Government with regard to that province. In their opinion, Japan ought to recognise formally that Manchuria lay outside her sphere of interest, and the negotiations should be confined to limiting her freedom of action in Korea.

With such a wide divergence in principle the

two parties were not likely to agree in matters of detail. Their conflicting aims came out most clearly in the question of the open door. The Japanese insisted on obtaining the privileges of the open door, including the right of settlement, in Manchuria, and Russia obstinately refused. Having marked out Manchuria as a close reserve for her own colonisation, trade, and industry, and knowing that she could not compete with the Japanese if they were freely admitted, she could not adopt the principle of "equal opportunity" which her rivals recommended. A *fidus Achates* of Admiral Alexeyef explained to me quite frankly, during the negotiations, why no concessions could be made on that point. In the work of establishing law and order in Manchuria, constructing roads, bridges, railways, and towns, Russia had expended an enormous sum — estimated by Count Cassini at £60,000,000—and until that capital was recovered, or until a reasonable interest was derived from the investment, Russia could not think of sharing with anyone the fruits of the prosperity which she had created.

We need not go further into the details of the negotiations. Japan soon convinced herself that the onward march of the Colossus was not to be stopped by paper barricades, and knowing well that her actual military and naval superiority was being rapidly diminished by Russia's warlike preparations,* she suddenly broke off diplomatic relations and commenced hostilities.

* According to an estimate made by the Japanese authorities, between April, 1903, and the outbreak of the war, Russia increased her naval and military forces in the Far East by nineteen war vessels, aggregating 82,415 tons, and 40,000 soldiers. In addition to this, one battleship, three cruisers, seven torpedo destroyers, and four torpedo boats, aggregating about 37,040 tons, were on their way to the East, and preparations had been made for increasing the land forces by 200,000 men. For further details, see Asakawa, "The Russo-Japanese Conflict" (London, 1904), pp. 352–54.

Russia thus found herself engaged in a war of the first magnitude, of which no one can predict the ultimate consequences, and the question naturally arises as to why, with an Emperor who lately aspired to play in politics the part of a great peacemaker, she provoked a conflict, for which she was very imperfectly prepared—imposing on herself the obligation of defending a naval fortress, hastily constructed on foreign territory, and united with her base by a single line of railway 6,000 miles long! The question is easily answered: she did not believe in the possibility of war. The Emperor was firmly resolved that he would not attack Japan, and no one would admit for a moment that Japan could have the audacity to attack the great Russian Empire. In the late autumn of 1903, it is true, a few well-informed officials in St. Petersburg, influenced by the warnings of Baron Rosen, the Russian Minister in Tokio, began to perceive that perhaps Japan would provoke a conflict, but they were convinced that the military and naval preparations already made were quite sufficient to repel the attack. One of these officials—probably the best informed of all—said to me quite frankly: "If Japan had attacked us in May or June, we should have been in a sorry plight, but now (November, 1903) we are ready."

The whole history of territorial expansion in Asia tended to confirm the prevailing illusions. Russia had advanced steadily from the Ural and the Caspian to the Hindu Kush and the Northern Pacific without once encountering serious resistance. Not once had she been called on to make a great national effort, and the armed resistance of the native races had never inflicted on her anything worse than pin-pricks. From decrepit China, which possessed no army in the European sense of the term, a more energetic resist-

ance was not to be expected. Had not Muravieff Amurski with a few Cossacks quietly occupied her Amur territories without provoking anything more dangerous than a diplomatic protest; and had not Ignatief annexed her rich Primorsk provinces, including the site of Vladivostock, by purely diplomatic means? Why should not Count Cassini, a diplomatist of the same type as Ignatief, imitate his adroit predecessor, and secure for Russia, if not the formal annexation, at least the permanent occupation, of Manchuria? Remembering all this, we can perceive that the great mistake of the Russian Government is not so very difficult to explain. It certainly did not want war—far from it—but it wanted to obtain Manchuria by a gradual, painless process of absorption, and it did not perceive that this could not be attained without a life-and-death struggle with a young, vigorous nationality, which has contrived to combine the passions and virtues of a primitive race with the organising powers and scientific appliances of the most advanced civilisation.

Russian territorial expansion has thus been checked, for some years to come, on the Pacific coast; but the expansive tendency will re-appear soon in other regions, and it behoves us to be watchful, because, whatever direction it may take, it is likely to affect our interests directly or indirectly. Will it confine itself for some years to a process of infiltration in Mongolia and Northern Thibet, the line of least resistance? Or will it impinge on our Indian frontier, directed by those who desire to avenge themselves on Japan's ally for the reverses sustained in Manchuria? Or will it once more take the direction of the Bosphorus, where a campaign might be expected to awaken religious and warlike enthusiasm among the masses? To these questions I cannot give any answer, because so much

depends on the internal consequences of the present war, and on accidental circumstances which no one can at present foresee. I have always desired, and still desire, that we should cultivate friendly relations with our great rival, and that we should learn to appreciate the many good qualities of her people; but I have at the same time always desired that we should keep a watchful eye on her irrepressible tendency to expand, and that we should take timely precautions against any unprovoked aggression, however justifiable it may seem to her from the point of view of her own national interests.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE PRESENT SITUATION.

Reform or Revolution?—Reigns of Alexander II. and Nicholas II. compared and contrasted—The Present Opposition—Various Groups—The Constitutionalists—Zemski Sobórs—The Young Tsar dispels Illusions—Liberal *Frondeurs*—Plehve's Repressive Policy—Discontent increased by the War—Relaxation and Wavering under Prince Mirski—Reform Enthusiasm—The Constitutionalists formulate their Demands—The Social Democrats—Father Gapon's Demonstration—The Socialist-Revolutionaries—The Agrarian Agitators—The Subject-Nationalities—Numerical Strength of the various Groups—All united on One Point—Their different Aims—Possible Solutions of the Crisis—Difficulties of introducing Constitutional *Régime*—A Strong Man wanted—Uncertainty of the Future.

Is history about to repeat itself, or are we on the eve of a cataclysm? Is the reign of Nicholas II. to be, in its main lines, a repetition of the reign of Alexander II., or is Russia about to enter on an entirely new phase of her political development?

To this momentous question I do not profess to give a categorical answer. If it be true, even in ordinary times, that "of all forms of human folly, prediction is the most gratuitous," it is especially true at a moment like the present, when we are constantly reminded of the French proverb that there is nothing certain but the unforeseen. All I can hope to do is to throw a little light on the elements of the problem, and allow the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Between the present situation and the early part of Alexander II.'s reign there is undoubtedly a certain analogy. In both cases we find in the educated classes a passionate desire for political liberty, generated by long years of a stern, autocratic *régime*, and stimulated by military disasters for which autocracy is held

responsible; and in both cases we find the throne occupied by a Sovereign of less accentuated political convictions and less energetic character than his immediate predecessor. In the earlier case, the autocrat, showing more perspicacity and energy than were expected of him, guides and controls the popular enthusiasm, and postpones the threatened political crisis by effecting a series of far-reaching and beneficent reforms. In the present case . . . . the description of the result must be left to future historians. For the moment, all we can say is that between the two situations there are as many points of difference as of analogy. After the Crimean War the enthusiasm was of a vague, eclectic kind, and consequently it could find satisfaction in practical administrative reforms not affecting the essence of the Autocratic Power, the main pivot round which the Empire has revolved for centuries. Now, on the contrary, it is precisely on this pivot that the reform enthusiasm is concentrated. Mere bureaucratic reforms can no longer give satisfaction. All sections of the educated classes, with the exception of a small group of Conservative doctrinaires, insist on obtaining a controlling influence in the government of the country, and demand that the Autocratic Power, if not abolished, shall be limited by parliamentary institutions of a democratic type.

Another difference between the present and the past, is that those who now clamour for radical changes are more numerous, more courageous, and better organised than their predecessors, and they are consequently better able to bring pressure to bear on the Government. Formerly the would-be reformers were of two categories; on the one hand, the Constitutionalists, who remained within the bounds of legality, and confined themselves to inserting vague

hints in loyal addresses to the Tsar and making mild political demonstrations; and on the other hand, the so-called Nihilists, who talked about organising society on Socialistic principles, and who hoped to attain their object by means of secret associations. With both of these groups, as soon as they became aggressive, the Government had no difficulty in dealing effectually. The leading Constitutionalists were simply reprimanded or ordered to remain for a time in their country houses, while the more active revolutionaries were exiled, imprisoned, or compelled to take refuge abroad. All this gave the police a good deal of trouble, especially when the Nihilists took to Socialist propaganda among the common people, and to acts of terrorism against the officials; but the existence of the Autocratic Power was never seriously endangered. Nowadays the Liberals have no fear of official reprimands, and openly disregard the orders of the authorities about holding meetings and making speeches, while a considerable section of the Socialists proclaim themselves a Social Democratic party, enrol large numbers of working men, organise formidable strikes, and make monster demonstrations leading to bloodshed.

Let us now examine this new Opposition a little more closely. We can perceive at a glance that it is composed of two sections, differing widely from each other in character and aims. On the one hand, there are the Liberals, who desire merely political reforms of a more or less democratic type; on the other, there are the Socialists, who aim at transforming thoroughly the existing economic organisation of Society, and who, if they desire parliamentary institutions at all, desire them simply as a stepping stone to the realisation of the Socialist ideal. Behind the Socialists, and to some extent mingling with them, stand a

number of men belonging to the various subject-nationalities, who have placed themselves under the Socialist banner, but who hold, more or less concealed, their little national flags, ready to be unfurled at the proper moment.

Of these three sections of the Opposition, the most numerous and the best prepared to undertake the functions and responsibilities of government is that of the Liberals. The movement which they represent began immediately after the Crimean War, when the upper ranks of Society, smarting under defeat and looking about for the cause of the military disasters, came to the conclusion that Autocracy had been put to a crucial test and found wanting. The outburst of patriotic indignation at that time and the eager desire for a more liberal *régime* have been described in previous chapters. For a moment the more sanguine critics of the Government imagined that the Autocratic Power, persuaded of its own inefficiency, would gladly accept the assistance of the educated classes, and would spontaneously transform itself into a Constitutional Monarchy. In reality Alexander II. had no such intentions. He was resolved to purify the administration and to reform as far as possible all existing abuses, and he seemed ready at first to listen to the advice and accept the co-operation of his faithful subjects; but he had not the slightest intention of limiting his supreme authority, which he regarded as essential to the existence of the Empire. As soon as the landed proprietors began to complain that the great question of serf emancipation was being taken out of their hands by the bureaucracy he reminded them that "in Russia laws are made by the Autocratic Power," and when the more courageous Marshals of Noblesse ventured to protest against the uncere-

monious manner in which the nobles were being treated by the *tchinóviks*, some of them were officially reprimanded and others were deposed.

The indignation produced by this procedure, in which the Tsar identified himself with the bureaucracy, was momentarily appeased by the decision of the Government to entrust to the landed proprietors the carrying out of the Emancipation law, and by the confident hope that political rights would be granted them as compensation for the material sacrifices they were making for the good of the State; but when they found that this confident hope was an illusion, the indignation and discontent reappeared.

There was still, however, a ray of hope. Though the Autocratic Power was evidently determined not to transform itself at once into a limited constitutional monarchy, it might make concessions in the sphere of local self-government. At that moment it was creating the Zemstvo, and the Constitutionalists hoped that these new institutions, though restricted legally to the sphere of purely economic wants, might gradually acquire a considerable political influence. Learned Germans had proved that in England, "the mother of modern Constitutionalism," it was on local self-government that the political liberties were founded, and the Slavophils now suggested that by means of an ancient institution called the Zemski Sobór, the Zemstvo might gradually and naturally acquire a political character in accordance with Russian historic development. As this idea has often been referred to in recent discussions I may explain briefly what the ancient institution in question was.

In the Tsardom of Muscovy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries representative assemblies were occasionally called together to deal with matters of exceptional importance, such as the election of a

Tsar when the throne became vacant, a declaration of war, the conclusion of a peace, or the preparation of a new code of laws. Some fifteen assemblies of the kind were convoked in the space of about a century (1550–1653). They were composed largely of officials named by the Government, but they contained also some representatives of the unofficial classes. Their procedure was peculiar. When a speech from the throne had been read by the Tsar or his representative, explaining the question to be decided, the assembly transformed itself into a large number of commissions, and each commission had to give in writing its opinion regarding the questions submitted to it. The opinions thus elicited were codified by the officials and submitted to the Tsar, and he was free to adopt or reject them as he thought fit. We may say, therefore, that the Zemski Sobór was merely consultative and had no legislative power; but we must add that it was allowed a certain initiative, because it was permitted to submit to the Tsar humble petitions regarding anything which it considered worthy of attention.

Alexander II. might have adopted this Slavophil idea and used the Zemski Sobór as a means of transition from pure autocracy to a more modern system of government, but he had no sooner created the Zemstvo than he thought it necessary, as we have seen, to clip its wings and dispel its political ambition. By this repressive policy the *frondeur* spirit in the Noblesse was revived, and it has continued to exist down to the present time. On each occasion when I revisited Russia and had an opportunity of feeling the pulse of public opinion between 1876 and 1903, I noticed that the dissatisfaction with the traditional methods of government, and the desire of the educated classes to obtain a share of the political power, notwithstanding

short periods of apparent apathy, were steadily spreading in area and increasing in intensity, and I often heard predictions that a disastrous foreign war like the Crimean campaign would probably bring about the desired changes. Of those who made such predictions not a few showed clearly that, though patriotic enough in a certain sense, they would not regret any military disaster which would have the effect they anticipated. Progress in the direction of political emancipation, accompanied by radical improvements in the administration, was evidently regarded as much more important and desirable than military prestige or extension of territory.

During the first part of the Turkish campaign of 1877–78, when the Russian armies were repulsed in Bulgaria and Asia Minor, the hostility to autocracy was very strong, and the famous acquittal of Vera Zasulitch, who had attempted to assassinate General Trepof, caused widespread satisfaction among people who were not themselves revolutionaries and who did not approve of such violent methods of political struggle. Towards the end of the war, when the tide of fortune had turned both in Europe and in Asia, and the Russian army was encamped under the walls of Constantinople, within sight of St. Sophia, the Chauvinist feelings gained the upper hand, and they were greatly intensified by the Congress of Berlin which deprived Russia of some fruits of her victories.

This change in public feeling and the horror excited by the assassination of Alexander II. prepared the way for Alexander III.'s reign (1881–94), which was a period of political stagnation. He was a man of strong character, and a vigorous ruler who believed in Autocracy as he did in the dogmas of his Church; and very soon after his accession he gave it clearly to be understood that he would permit no limitations of

the Autocratic Power. The men with Liberal aspirations knew that nothing would make him change his mind on that subject and that any Liberal demonstrations would merely confirm him in his reactionary tendencies. They accordingly remained quiet and prudently waited for better times.

The better times were supposed to have come when Nicholas II. ascended the throne in November, 1894, because it was generally assumed that the young Tsar, who was known to be humane and well-intentioned, would inaugurate a more liberal policy. Before he had been three months on the throne he summarily destroyed these illusions. On 17th (29th) January, 1895, when receiving deputies from the Noblesse, the Zemstvo, and the municipalities, who had come to St. Petersburg to congratulate him on his marriage, he declared his confidence in the sincerity of the loyal feelings which the delegates expressed; and then, to the astonishment of all present, he added: "It is known to me that recently, in some Zemstvo assemblies, were heard the voices of people who had let themselves be carried away by absurd dreams of the Zemstvo representatives taking part in the affairs of internal administration; let them know that I, devoting all my efforts to the prosperity of the nation, will preserve the principles of autocracy as firmly and unswervingly as my late father of imperishable memory."

These words, pronounced by the young ruler at the commencement of his reign, produced profound disappointment and dissatisfaction in all sections of the educated classes, and from that moment the *frondeur* spirit began to show itself more openly than at any previous period. In the case of some people of good social position it took the unusual form of speaking disrespectfully of His Majesty. Others

supposed that the Emperor had simply repeated words prepared for him by the Minister of the Interior, and this idea spread rapidly till hostility to the bureaucracy became universal.

This feeling reached its climax when the Ministry of the Interior was confided to M. Plehve. His immediate predecessors, though sincere believers in autocracy and very hostile to Liberalism of all kinds, had considered that the Liberal ideas might be rendered harmless by firm passive resistance and mild reactionary measures. He, on the contrary, took a more alarmist view of the situation. His appointment coincided with the revival of Terrorism, and he believed that autocracy was in danger. To save it, the only means was, in his opinion, a vigorous, repressive police administration, and as he was a man of strong convictions and exceptional energy, he screwed up his system of police supervision to the sticking-point and applied it to the Liberals as well as to the Terrorists. In the year 1903, if we may credit information which comes from an apparently trustworthy source, no fewer than 1,988 political affairs were initiated by the police, and 4,867 persons were condemned inquisitorially to various punishments without any regular trial.

Whilst this unpopular rigorism was in full force the war unexpectedly broke out, and added greatly to the existing discontent.

Very few people in Russia had been following closely the recent developments of the Far Eastern Question, and still fewer understood their importance. There seemed to be nothing abnormal in what was taking place. Russia was expanding, and would continue to expand indefinitely, in that direction without any strenuous effort on her part. Of course the English would try to arrest her progress, as

usual, by diplomatic notes; but their efforts would be as futile as they had been on all previous occasions. They might incite the Japanese to active resistance, but Japan would not commit the insane folly of challenging her giant rival to mortal combat. The whole question could be settled in accordance with Russian interests, as so many similar questions had been settled in the past, by a little skilful diplomacy; and Manchuria could be absorbed, as the contiguous Chinese provinces had been forty years ago, without the necessity of going to war.

When these comforting illusions were suddenly destroyed by the rupture of diplomatic relations and the naval attack on Port Arthur, there was an outburst of indignant astonishment. At first the indignation was directed against Japan and England, but it soon turned against the home Government, which had made no adequate preparations for the struggle, and it was intensified by current rumours that the crisis had been wantonly provoked by certain influential personages for purely personal reasons.

How far the accounts of the disorders in the military organisation and the rumours about pilfering in high quarters were true we need not inquire. True or false, they helped greatly to make the war unpopular, and to stimulate the desire for political changes. Under a more liberal and enlightened *régime*, such things were supposed to be impossible and, as at the time of the Crimean War, public opinion decided that autocracy was being tried and found wanting.

So long as the stern, uncompromising Plehve was at the Ministry of the Interior, enjoying the Emperor's confidence and directing the police administration, public opinion was prudent and reserved in its utterances, but when he was assassinated by a

Terrorist (July 28th, 1904), and was succeeded by Prince Sviatopolk Mirski, a humane man of Liberal views, the Constitutionalists thought that the time had come for making known their grievances and demands, and for bringing pressure to bear on the Emperor. First came forward the leading members of the Zemstvos. After some preliminary consultation they assembled in St. Petersburg, with the consent of the authorities, in the hope that they would be allowed to discuss publicly the political wants of the country, and prepare the draft of a Constitution. Their wishes were only partially acceded to. They were informed semi-officially that their meetings must be private, but that they might send their resolutions to the Minister of the Interior for transmission to His Majesty. A memorandum was accordingly drawn up and signed on November 21st by 102 out of the 104 representatives present.

This hesitating attitude on the part of the Government encouraged other sections of the educated classes to give expression to their long pent-up political aspirations. On the heels of the Zemstvo delegates appeared the barristers, who discussed the existing evils from the juridical point of view, and prescribed what they considered the necessary remedies. Then came municipalities of the large towns, corporations of various kinds, academic leagues, medical faculties, learned societies, and miscellaneous gatherings, all demanding reforms. Great banquets were organised, and very strong speeches, which would have led in Plehve's time to the immediate arrest of the orators, were delivered and published without provoking police intervention.

In the memorandum presented to the Minister of the Interior by the Zemstvo Congress, and in the resolutions passed by the other corporate bodies, we see

reflected the grievances and aspirations of the great majority of the educated classes.

The theory propounded in these documents is that a lawless, arbitrary bureaucracy, which seeks to exclude the people from all participation in the management of public affairs, has come between the nation and the Supreme Power, and that it is necessary to eliminate at once this baneful intermediary, and inaugurate the so-called "reign of law." For this purpose the petitioners and orators demanded:

(1) Inviolability of person and domicile, so that no one should be troubled by the police without a warrant from an independent magistrate, and no one punished without a regular trial;

(2) Freedom of conscience, of speech, and of the Press, together with the right of holding public meetings and forming associations;

(3) Greater freedom and increased activity of the local self-government, rural and municipal;

(4) An assembly of freely elected representatives, who should participate in the legislative activity and control the administration in all its branches;

(5) The immediate convocation of a constituent assembly which should frame a Constitution on these lines.

Of these requirements the last two are considered by far the most important. The truth is that the educated classes have come to be possessed of an ardent desire for genuine parliamentary institutions on a broad, democratic basis, and neither improvements in the bureaucratic organisation, nor even a Zemski Sobór in the sense of a consultative assembly, would satisfy them. They imagine that with a fully-fledged constitution they would be guaranteed, not only against administrative oppression, but even against military reverses such as they have recently ex-

perienced in the Far East—an opinion in which those who know by experience how military unreadiness and inefficiency can be combined with parliamentary institutions will hardly feel inclined to concur.

It may surprise English readers to learn that the corruption and venality of the civil and military administration, of which we have recently heard so much, are nowhere mentioned in the complaints and remonstrances; but the fact is easily accounted for. Though corrupt practices undoubtedly exist in some branches of the public service, they are not so universal as is commonly supposed in Western Europe; and the Russian reformers evidently consider that the purifying of the administration is less urgent than the acquisition of political liberties, or that under an enlightened democratic *régime* the existing abuses would spontaneously disappear.

The demands put forward in St. Petersburg did not meet with universal approval in Moscow. There they seemed excessive and un-Russian, and an attempt was made to form a more moderate party. In the ancient capital of the Tsars even among the Liberals there are not a few who have a sentimental tenderness for the Autocratic Power, and they argue that parliamentary government would be very dangerous in a country which is still far from being homogeneous or compact. To maintain the integrity of the Empire, and to hold the balance equally between the various races and social classes of which the population is composed, it is necessary, they think, to have some permanent authority above the sphere of party spirit and electioneering strife. While admitting that the Government in its present bureaucratic form is unsatisfactory and stands in need of being enlightened by the unofficial classes, they think that a consultative assembly on the model of the old

Zemski Sobórs would be infinitely better suited to Russian wants than a Parliament such as that which sits at Westminster.

For a whole month the Government took little notice of the unprecedented excitement and demonstrations. It was not till December 25th that a reply was given to the public demands. On that day the Emperor signed an ukaz in which he enumerated the reforms which he considered most urgent, and instructed the Committee of Ministers to prepare the requisite legislation. The list of reforms coincided to a certain extent with the demands formulated by the Zemstvos, but the document as a whole produced profound disappointment, because it contained no mention of a National Assembly. To those who could read between the lines the attitude of the Emperor seemed perfectly clear. He was evidently desirous of introducing very considerable reforms, but he was resolved that they must be effected by the unimpaired Autocratic Power in the old bureaucratic fashion, without any participation of the unofficial world. To obviate any misconceptions on this point, the Government published, simultaneously with the ukaz, an official communication in which it condemned the agitation and excitement, and warned the Zemstvos, municipalities, and other corporate bodies that in discussing political questions they were overstepping the limits of their legally-defined functions, and exposing themselves to the rigours of the law.

As might have been foreseen, the ukaz and the circular had not at all the desired effect of "introducing the necessary tranquillity into public life, which has lately been diverted from its normal course." On the contrary, they increased the excitement, and evoked a new series of public demonstrations. On December 27th, the very day on which the

two official documents were published—the Provincial Zemstvo of Moscow, openly disregarding the ministerial warnings, expressed the conviction that the day was near when the bureaucratic *régime*, which had so long estranged the Supreme Power from the people, would be changed, and when freely-elected representatives of the people would take part in legislation. The same evening, at St. Petersburg, a great Liberal banquet was held, at which a resolution was voted condemning the war, and declaring that Russia could be extricated from her difficulties only by the representatives of the nation, freely elected by secret ballot. As an encouragement to the organs of local administration to persevere in their disregard of ministerial instructions, the St. Petersburg Medical Society, after adopting the programme of the Zemstvo Congress, sent telegrams of congratulation to the Mayor of Moscow and the President of the Tchernigof Zemstvo bureau, both of whom had incurred the displeasure of the Government. A similar telegram was sent by a Congress of 496 engineers to the Moscow Town Council, in which the burning political questions had been freely discussed. In other large towns, when the mayor prevented such discussions, a considerable number of the town councillors resigned.

From the Zemstvos and municipalities the spirit of opposition spread to the provincial assemblies of the Noblesse. The nobles of the province of St. Petersburg, for example, voted by a large majority an address to the Tsar recommending the convocation of a freely-elected National Assembly; and in Moscow, usually regarded as the fortress of Conservatism, eighty members of the Assembly entered a formal protest against a patriotic Conservative address which had been voted two days before. Even the fair sex considered it necessary to support the opposition move-

ment. The matrons of Moscow, in a humble petition to the Empress, declared that they could not continue to bring up their children properly in the existing state of unconstitutional lawlessness, and their view was endorsed in several provincial towns by the schoolboys, who marched through the streets in procession, and refused to learn their lessons until popular liberties had been granted!

Again, for more than a month the Government remained silent on the fundamental questions which were exercising the public mind. At last, on the morning of March 3rd, 1905, appeared an Imperial manifesto of a very unexpected kind. In it the Emperor deplored the outbreak of internal disturbances at a moment when the glorious sons of Russia were fighting with self-sacrificing bravery and offering up their lives for the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland; but he drew consolation and hope from remembering that, with the help of the prayers of the Holy Orthodox Church, under the banner of the Tsar's autocratic might, Russia had frequently passed through great wars and internal troubles, and had always issued from them with fresh strength. He appealed, therefore, to all right-minded subjects, to whatever class they might belong, to join him in the great and sacred task of overcoming the stubborn foreign foe, and eradicating revolt at home. As for the manner in which he hoped this might be accomplished, he gave a pretty clear indication, at the end of the document, by praying to God, not only for the welfare of his subjects, but also for "the consolidation of autocracy."

This extraordinary pronouncement, couched in semi-ecclesiastical language, produced in the Liberal world feelings of surprise, disappointment, and dismay. No one was more astonished and dismayed than the Ministers, who had known nothing of the manifesto

until they saw it in the official Gazette. In the course of the forenoon they paid their usual weekly visit to Tsarskoe Selo, and respectfully submitted to the Emperor that such a document must have a deplorable effect on public opinion. In consequence of their representations his Majesty consented to supplement the manifesto by a rescript to the Minister of the Interior, in which he explained that in carrying out his intentions for the welfare of his people the Government was to have the co-operation of "the experienced elements of the community." Then followed the memorable words: "I am resolved henceforth, with the help of God, to convene the most worthy men, possessing the confidence of the people and elected by them, in order that they may participate in the preparation and consideration of legislative measures." For the carrying out of this resolution a commission, or "special conference," was to be at once convened, under the presidency of M. Bulyghin, the Minister of the Interior.

The rescript softened the impression produced by the manifesto, but it did not give general satisfaction, because it contained significant indications that the Emperor, while promising to create an assembly of some kind, was still determined to maintain the Autocratic Power. So at least the public interpreted a vague phase about the difficulty of introducing reforms "while preserving absolutely the immutability of the fundamental laws of the Empire." And this impression seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the task of preparing the future representative institutions was confided, not to a constituent assembly, but to a small commission composed chiefly or entirely of officials.

In these circumstances the Liberals determined to continue the agitation. The Bulyghin Commission was accordingly inundated with petitions and addresses

explaining the wants of the nation in general, and of various sections of it in particular; and when the Minister declined to receive deputations and discuss with them the aforesaid wants, the reform question was taken up by a new series of congresses, composed of doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists, etc. Even the higher ecclesiastical dignitaries woke up for a moment from their accustomed lethargy, remembered how they had lived for so many years under the rod of M. Pobêdonostsef, recognised as uncanonical such subordination to a layman, and petitioned for the resurrection of the Patriarchate, which had been abolished by Peter the Great.

On May 9th a new Zemstvo Congress was held in Moscow, and it at once showed that since their November session in St. Petersburg the delegates had made a decided movement to the Left. Those of them who had then led the movement were now regarded as too Conservative. The idea of a Zemski Sobór was discarded as insufficient for the necessities of the situation, and strong speeches were made in support of a much more democratic constitution.

It was thus becoming clearer every day that between the Liberals and the Government there was an essential difference which could not be removed by ordinary concessions. The Emperor proved that he was in favour of reform by granting a very large measure of religious toleration, by removing some of the disabilities imposed on the Poles and allowing the Polish language to be used in schools, and by confirming the proposals of the Committee of Ministers to place the Press-censure on a legal basis. But these concessions to public opinion did not gain for him the sympathy and support of his Liberal subjects. What they insisted on was a considerable limitation of the Autocratic Power; and on that point the Emperor

has hitherto shown himself inexorable. His firmness proceeds not from any wayward desire to be able to do as he pleases, but from a hereditary respect for a principle. From his boyhood he has been taught that Russia owes her greatness and her security to her autocratic form of government, and that it is the sacred duty of a Tsar to hand down intact to his successors the power which he holds in trust for them.

While the Liberals were thus striving to attain their object without popular disorders, and without any very serious infraction of the law, the Revolutionaries were likewise busy, working on different but parallel lines.

In the chapter on the latest phase of the revolutionary movement (Chapter XXXVII.) I have sketched briefly the origin and character of the two main Socialist groups, and I have now merely to convey a general idea of their attitude during recent events. And first of the Social Democrats.

At the end of 1894 the Social Democrats were in what may be called their normal condition—that is to say, they were occupied in organising and developing the Labour Movement. The removal of Plehve, who had greatly hampered them by his energetic police administration, enabled them to work more freely, and they looked with a friendly eye on the efforts of the Liberal Zemstvo-ists; but they took no part in the agitation, because the Zemstvo world lay outside their sphere of action. In the labour world, to which they confined their attention, they must have foreseen that a crisis would sooner or later be produced by the war, and that they would then have an excellent opportunity of preaching their doctrine that for all the sufferings of the working classes the Government is responsible. What they did not foresee was that serious labour troubles were so near at hand, and that

the conflict with the authorities would be accelerated by Father Gapon. Accustomed to regard him as a persistent opponent, they did not expect him to become suddenly an energetic, self-willed ally. Hence they were taken unawares, and at first the direction of the movement was by no means entirely in their hands. Very soon, however, they grasped the situation, and utilised it for their own ends. It was in great measure due to their secret organisation and activity that the strike in the Putilof Ironworks, which might easily have been terminated amicably, spread rapidly not only to the other works and factories in St. Petersburg, but also to those of Moscow, Riga, Warsaw, Lodz, and other industrial centres. Though they did not approve of Father Gapon's idea of presenting a petition to the Tsar, the loss of life which his demonstration occasioned was very useful to them in their efforts to propagate the belief that the Autocratic Power is the ally of the capitalists and hostile to the claims and aspirations of the working classes.

The other great Socialist group contributed much more largely towards bringing about the present state of things. It was their Militant Organisation that assassinated Plehve, and thereby roused the Liberals to action. To them, likewise, is due the subsequent assassination of the Grand Duke Serge, and it is an open secret that they are preparing other acts of Terrorism of a similar kind. At the same time they have been very active in creating provincial revolutionary committees, in printing and distributing revolutionary literature, and, above all, in organising agrarian disturbances, which they intend to make a very important factor in the development of events. Indeed, it is chiefly by agrarian disturbances that they hope to overthrow the Autocratic Power and bring about the

great economic and social revolution to which the political revolution would be merely the prologue.

Therein lies a serious danger.

After the failure of the propaganda and the insurrectionary agitation in the Seventies, it became customary in revolutionary circles to regard the muzhik as impervious to Socialist ideas and insurrectionary excitement, but the hope of eventually employing him in the cause never quite died out, and in recent times, when his economic condition in many districts has become critical, attempts have occasionally been made to embarrass the Government by agrarian disturbances. The method usually employed is to disseminate among the peasantry by oral propaganda, by printed or hectographed leaflets, and by forged Imperial manifestoes, the belief that the Tsar has ordered the land of the proprietors to be given to the Rural Communes, and that his benevolent wishes are being frustrated by the landowners and the officials. The forged manifesto is sometimes written in letters of gold as a proof of its being genuine, and in one case which I heard of in the province of Poltava, the revolutionary agent, wearing the uniform of an aide-de-camp of the Emperor, induced the village priest to read the document in the parish church.

The danger lies in the fact that, quite independently of revolutionary activity, there has always been, since the time of the Emancipation, a widespread belief among the peasantry that they would sooner or later receive the whole of the land. Successive Tsars have tried personally to destroy this illusion, but their efforts have not been successful. Alexander II., when passing through a province where the idea was very prevalent, caused a number of village elders to be brought before him, and told them in a threatening tone that they must remain satisfied with their allot-

ments and pay their taxes regularly; but the wily peasants could not be convinced that the "General" who had talked to them in this sense was really the Tsar. Alexander III. made a similar attempt at the time of his accession. To the *Vólost* elders collected together from all parts of the Empire, he said: "Do not believe the foolish rumours and absurd reports about a redistribution of the land, an addition to your allotments, and such like things. These reports are disseminated by your enemies. Every kind of property, your own included, must be inviolable." Recalling these words, Nicholas II. confirmed them at his accession, and warned the peasants not to be led astray by evil-disposed persons.

Notwithstanding these repeated warnings, the peasants still cling to the idea that all the land belongs to them; and the Socialist-Revolutionaries now announce publicly that they intend to use this belief for the purpose of carrying out their revolutionary designs. In a pamphlet entitled "Concerning Liberty and the means of obtaining it," they explain their plan of campaign. Under the guidance of the revolutionary agents the peasants of each district all over the Empire are to make it impossible for the proprietors to work their estates, and then, after driving away the local authorities and rural police, they are to take possession of the estates for their own use. The Government, in its vain attempts to dislodge them, will have to employ all the troops at its disposal, and this will give the working classes of the towns, led by the Revolutionists, an opportunity of destroying the most essential parts of the administrative mechanism. Thus a great social revolution can be successfully accomplished, and any Zemski Sobór or Parliament which may be convoked will merely have to give a legislative sanction to accomplished facts.

These three groups—the Liberals, the Social Democrats, and the Socialist-Revolutionaries—constitute what may be called the purely Russian Opposition. They found their claims and justify their action on utilitarian and philosophic grounds, and demand liberty (in various senses) for themselves and others, independently of race and creed. This distinguishes them from the fourth group, who claim to represent the subject-nationalities, and who mingle nationalist feelings and aspirations with enthusiasm for liberty and justice in the abstract.

The policy of Russifying these subject-nationalities, which was inaugurated by Alexander III. and maintained by his successor, has failed in its object. It has increased the use of the Russian language in official procedure, modified the system of instruction in the schools and universities, and brought, nominally, a few schismatic and heretical sheep into the Eastern Orthodox fold, but it has entirely failed to inspire the subject-populations with Russian feeling and national patriotism; on the contrary, it has aroused in them a bitter hostility to Russian nationality, and to the central government. In such of them as have retained their old aspirations of political independence —notably the Poles—the semi-latent disaffection has been stimulated; and in those of them which, like the Finlanders and the Armenians, desire merely to preserve the limited autonomy they formerly enjoyed, a sentiment of disaffection has been created. All of them know very well that in an armed struggle with the dominant Russian nationality they would speedily be crushed, as the Poles were in 1863. Their disaffection shows itself, therefore, merely in resistance to the obligatory military service, and in an undisguised or thinly veiled attitude of systematic hostility, which causes the Government some anxiety and prevents it

from sending to the Far East a large number of troops which would otherwise be available. They hail, however, with delight the Liberal and revolutionary movements in the hope that the Russians themselves may undermine, and possibly overthrow, the tyrannical Autocratic Power. Towards this end they would gladly co-operate, and they are endeavouring, therefore, to get into touch with each other; but they have so little in common, and so many mutually antagonistic interests, that they are not likely to succeed in forming a solid coalition.

While sympathising with every form of opposition to the Government, the men of the subject-nationalities reserve their special affection for the Socialists, because these not only proclaim, like the Liberals, the principles of extensive local self-government and universal equality before the law, but they also speak of replacing the existing system of coercive centralisation by a voluntary confederation of heterogeneous units. This explains why so many Poles, Armenians and Georgians are to be found in the ranks of the Social Democrats and the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

Of the recruits from oppressed nationalities the great majority come from the Jews, who, though they have never dreamed of political independence, or even of local autonomy, have most reason to complain of the existing order of things. At all times they have furnished a goodly contingent to the revolutionary movement, and many of them have belied their traditional reputation of timidity and cowardice by taking part in very dangerous Terrorist enterprises—in some cases ending their career on the scaffold. In 1897 they created a Social-Democratic organisation of their own, commonly known as the Bund, which joined, in 1898, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, on the

understanding that it should retain its independence on all matters affecting exclusively the Jewish population.* It now possesses a very ably-conducted weekly organ, and of all sections of the Social-Democratic group it is unquestionably the best organised. This is not surprising, because the Jews have more business capacity than the Russians, and centuries of oppression have developed in the race a wonderful talent for secret illegal activity, and for eluding the vigilance of the police.

It would be very interesting to know the numerical strength of these groups, but we have no materials for forming even an approximate estimate. The Liberals are certainly the most numerous. They include the great majority of the educated classes, but they are less persistently energetic than their rivals, and their methods of action make less impression on the Government. The two Socialist groups, though communicative enough with regard to their doctrines and aims, are very reticent with regard to the number of their adherents, and this naturally awakens a suspicion that an authoritative statement on the subject would tend to diminish rather than enhance their importance in the eyes of the public. If statistics of the Social Democrats could be obtained, it would be necessary to distinguish between the three categories of which the group is composed: (1) The educated active members, who form the directing, controlling element; (2) the fully indoctrinated recruits from the working classes; and (3) workmen who desire merely to better their material condition, but who take part in political demonstrations in the hope of bringing pressure to bear on their employers,

* The official title of this Bund is the "Universal Jewish Labour Union in Russia and Poland." Its organ is called *Sovremenniya Izvêstiya* (Contemporary News).

and inducing the Government to intervene on their behalf.

The two Socialist groups are not only increasing the number of their adherents; they are also extending and improving their organisation, as is proved by the recent strikes, which are the work of the Social Democrats, and by the increasing rural disturbances and acts of terrorism, which are the work of the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

With regard to the unorganised Nationalist group, all I can do towards conveying a vague, general idea of its numerical strength, is to give the numbers of the populations—men, women, and children—of which the nationalist agitators are the self-constituted representatives, without attempting to estimate the percentage of the actively disaffected. The populations in question are:—

Poles	7,900,000
Jews	5,190,000
Finlanders	2,592,000
Armenians	1,200,000
Georgians	408,000
	17,290,000

If a National Assembly were created, in which all the Nationalities were represented according to the numbers of the population, the Poles, roughly speaking, would have 38 members, the Jews 24, the Finlanders 12, the Armenians 6, and the Georgians 2; whereas the Russians would have about 400. The other subject-nationalities in which symptoms of revolutionary fermentation have appeared are too insignificant to require special mention.

As the representatives of the various subject-nationalities are endeavouring to combine, so likewise are the Liberals and the two Socialist groups trying

to form a coalition, and for this purpose they have already held several conferences. How far they will succeed it is impossible to say. On one point—the necessity of limiting or abolishing the Autocratic Power—they are unanimous, and there seems to be a tacit understanding that for the present they shall work together amicably on parallel lines, each group reserving its freedom of action for the future, and using meanwhile its own customary means of putting pressure on the Government. We may expect, therefore, that for a time the Liberals will go on holding conferences and congresses in defiance of the police authorities, delivering eloquent speeches, discussing thorny political questions, drafting elaborate constitutions, and making gentle efforts to clog the wheels of the Administration,* while the Social Democrats will continue to organise strikes and semi-pacific demonstrations,† and the Socialist-Revolutionaries will seek to accelerate the march of events by agrarian disturbances and acts of terrorism. It is certain, however, that the parting of the ways will be reached sooner or later, and already there are indications that it is not very far off. Liberals and Social Democrats may perhaps work together for a considerable time, because the latter, though publicly committed to socialistic schemes which the Liberals must regard with the strongest antipathy, are willing to accept a Constitutional *régime* during the period of transition. It is difficult, however, to imagine that the Liberals, of whom a large proportion are landed proprietors, can long go hand in hand with the Socialist-Revolu-

* As an illustration of this I may cite the fact that several Zemstvos have declared themselves unable, under present conditions, to support the indigent families of soldiers at the front.

† I call them semi-pacific, because on such occasions the demonstrators are instructed to refrain from violence only so long as the police do not attempt to stop the proceedings by force.

tionaries, who propose to bring about the revolution by inciting the peasants to seize unceremoniously the estates, live stock, and agricultural implements of the landlords.

Already the Socialist-Revolutionaries have begun to speak publicly of the inevitable rupture in terms by no means flattering to their temporary allies. In a brochure recently issued by their central committee the following passage occurs:—

"If we consider the matter seriously and attentively, it becomes evident that all the strength of the *bourgeoisie* lies in its greater or less capacity for frightening and intimidating the Government by the fear of a popular rising; but as the *bourgeoisie* itself stands in mortal terror of the thing with which it frightens the Government, its position at the moment of insurrection will be rather ridiculous and pitiable."

To understand the significance of this passage, the reader must know that, in the language of the Socialists, *bourgeoisie* and Liberals are convertible terms.

The truth is that the Liberals find themselves in an awkward strategical position. As quiet, respectable members of society they dislike violence of every kind, and occasionally in moments of excitement they believe that they may attain their ends by mere moral pressure, but when they find that academic protests and pacific demonstrations make no perceptible impression on the Government, they become impatient and feel tempted to approve, at least tacitly, of stronger measures. Many of them do not profess to regard with horror and indignation the acts of the Terrorists, and some of them, if I am correctly informed, go so far as to subscribe to the funds of the Socialist-Revolutionaries without taking very stringent precautions against the danger of the money being employed for the preparation of dynamite and hand grenades.

This extraordinary conduct on the part of moderate Liberals may well surprise Englishmen, but it is easily explained. The Russians have a strong vein of recklessness in their character, and many of them are at present imbued with an unquestioning faith in the miracle-working power of Constitutionalism. These seem to imagine that as soon as the Autocratic Power is limited by parliamentary institutions, the discontented will cease from troubling and the country will be at rest.

It is hardly necessary to say that such expectations are not likely to be realised. All sections of the educated classes may be agreed in desiring "liberty," but the word has many meanings, and nowhere more than in Russia at the present day. For the Liberal it means simply democratic parliamentary government; for the Social Democrat it means the undisputed predominance of the Proletariat; for the Socialist-Revolutionary it means the opportunity of realising immediately the Socialist ideal; for the representative of a subject-nationality it means the abolition of racial and religious disabilities and the attainment of local autonomy or political independence. There is no doubt, therefore, that in Russia, as in other countries, a parliament would develop political parties bitterly hostile to each other, and its early history might contain some startling surprises for those who had helped to create it. If the Constitution, for example, were made as democratic as the Liberals and Socialists demand, the elections might possibly result in an overwhelming Conservative majority ready to re-establish the Autocratic Power! This is not at all so absurd as it sounds, for the peasants, apart from the land question, are thoroughly Conservative. The ordinary muzhik can hardly conceive that the Emperor's power can be

limited by a law or an Assembly, and if the idea were suggested to him, he would certainly not approve. In his opinion the Tsar should be omnipotent. If everything is not satisfactory in Russia, it is because the Tsar does not know of the evil, or is prevented from curing it by the *tchinóvniks* and the landed proprietors. "More power, therefore, to his elbow!" as an Irishman might say. Such is the simple political creed of the "undeveloped" muzhik, and all the efforts of the revolutionary groups to develop him have not yet been attended with much success.

How, then, the reader may ask, is an issue to be found out of the present imbroglio? I cannot pretend to speak with authority, but it seems to me that there are only two methods of dealing with the situation: prompt, energetic repression, or timely, judicious concessions to popular feeling. Either of these methods might, perhaps, have been successful, but the Government adopted neither, and has halted between the two. By this policy of drift it has encouraged the hopes of all, has satisfied nobody, and has diminished its own prestige.

In defence or extenuation of this attitude it may be said that there is considerable danger in the adoption of either course. Vigorous repression means staking all on a single card, and if it were successful it could not do more than postpone the evil day, because the present antiquated form of government —suitable enough, perhaps, for a simply organised peasant-empire vegetating in an atmosphere of "eternal stillness"—cannot permanently resist the rising tide of modern ideas and aspirations, and is incapable of grappling successfully with the complicated problems of economic and social progress which are already awaiting solution. Sooner or later the bureaucratic machine, driven solely by the Autocratic Power in

the teeth of popular apathy or opposition, must inevitably break down, and the longer the collapse is postponed the more violent is it likely to be. On the other hand, it is impossible to foresee the effects of concessions. Mere bureaucratic reforms will satisfy no one; they are indeed not wanted except as a result of more radical changes. What all sections of the Opposition demand is that the people should at least take part in the government of the country by means of freely elected representatives in Parliament assembled. It is useless to argue with them that Constitutionalism will certainly not work the miracles that are expected of it, and that in the struggles of political parties which it is sure to produce, the unity and integrity of the Empire may be endangered. Lessons of that kind can only be learned by experience. Other countries, it is said, have existed and thriven under free political institutions, and why not Russia? Why should she be a pariah among the nations? She gave parliamentary institutions to the young nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula as soon as they were liberated from Turkish bondage, and she has not yet been allowed such privileges herself!

Let us suppose now that the Autocratic Power has come to feel the impossibility of remaining isolated as it is at present, and that it has decided to seek solid support in some section of the population, what section should it choose? Practically it has no choice. The only way of relieving the pressure is to make concessions to the Constitutionalists. That course would conciliate, not merely the section of the Opposition which calls itself by that name and represents the majority of the educated classes, but also, in a lesser degree, all the other sections. No doubt these latter would accept the concession only as part payment of their demands and a means of attaining ulterior aims.

Again and again the Social Democrats have proclaimed publicly that they desire parliamentary government, not as an end in itself, but as a stepping stone towards the realisation of the Socialist ideal. It is evident, however, that they would have to remain on this stepping stone for a long series of years—until the representatives of the Proletariat obtained an overwhelming majority in the Chamber. In like manner the subject-nationalities would regard a parliamentary *régime* as a mere temporary expedient—a means of attaining greater local and national autonomy—and they would probably show themselves more impatient than the Social Democrats. Any inordinate claims however which they might put forward would encounter resistance, as the Poles found in 1863, not merely from the Autocratic Power, but from the great majority of the Russian people, who have no sympathy with any efforts tending to bring about the disruption of the Empire. In short, as soon as the assembly set to work, the delegates would be sobered by a consciousness of responsibility, and differences of opinion and aims would inevitably appear. The amorphous groups would be transformed into organised political parties, and instead of all endeavouring, as at present, to pull down the Autocratic Power, they would expend a great part of their energy in pulling against each other.

In order to reach this haven of safety it is necessary to pass through a period of transition, in which there are some formidable difficulties. One of these I may mention by way of illustration.

In creating parliamentary institutions of any kind the Government could hardly leave intact the present system of allowing the police to arrest without a proper warrant, and send into exile without trial, any one suspected of revolutionary designs. On this point all the Opposition groups are agreed, and all

consequently put forward prominently the demand for the inviolability of person and domicile. To grant such a concession seems a very simple and easy matter, but any responsible Minister might hesitate to accept such a restriction of his authority. We know, he would argue, that the Terrorist section of the Socialist-Revolutionary group, the so-called Militant Organisation, are very busy preparing bombs, while the police, even with the extensive, ill-defined powers which they at present possess, have the greatest difficulty in preventing the use of such objectionable instruments of political warfare. Would not the dynamiters and throwers of hand-grenades utilise a relaxation of police supervision, as they did in the time of Loris Melikof,* for carrying out their nefarious designs?

I have no desire to conceal or minimise such dangers, but I believe they are temporary and by no means so great as the dangers of the only other alternatives—energetic repression and listless inactivity. Terrorism and similar objectionable methods of political warfare are symptoms of an abnormal, unhealthy state of society, and would doubtless disappear in Russia, as they have disappeared in other countries, with the conditions which produced them. If the Terrorists continued to exist under a more liberal *régime*, they would be much less formidable, because they would lose the half-concealed sympathy which they at present enjoy.

Political assassinations may occasionally take place under the most democratic governments, as the history of the United States proves, but Terrorism as a system is to be found only in countries where the political power is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals; and it sometimes happens that irrespon-

* *Vide supra*, II., pp. 345–6.

sible persons are exposed to terrorist attacks. We have an instance of this at present in St. Petersburg. The reluctance of the Emperor to adopt at once a Liberal programme is commonly attributed to the influence of two members of the Imperial family, the Empress Dowager and the Grand Duke Vladimir. This is a mistake. Neither of these personages is so reactionary as is generally supposed, and their political views, whatever they may be, have no appreciable influence on the course of affairs. If the Empress Dowager had possessed the influence so often ascribed to her, M. Plehve would not have remained so long in power. As for the Grand Duke Vladimir, he is not in favour, and for nearly two years he has never been consulted on political matters. The so-called Grand Ducal party of which he is supposed to be the leader, is a recently invented fiction. When in difficulties the Emperor may consult individually some of his near relatives, but there is no coherent group to which the term party could properly be applied.

As soon as the Autocratic Power has decided on a definite line of action, it is to be hoped that a strong man will be found to take the direction of affairs. In Russia, as in other autocratically governed countries, strong men in the political sense of the term are extremely rare, and when they do appear as a *lusus naturæ* they generally take their colour from their surroundings, and are of the authoritative, dictatorial type. During recent years only two strong men have come to the front in the Russian official world. The one was M. Plehve, who was nothing if not authoritative and dictatorial, and who is no longer available for experiments in repression or constitutionalism. The other is M. Witte. As an administrator under an autocratic *régime* he has

displayed immense ability and energy, but it does not follow that he is a statesman capable of piloting the ship into calm waters, and he is not likely to have an opportunity of making the attempt, for he does not —to state the case mildly—possess the full confidence of his august master.

Even if a strong man, enjoying fully the imperial confidence, could be found, the problem would not be thereby completely and satisfactorily solved, because an autocrat, who is the Lord's Anointed, cannot delegate his authority to a simple mortal without losing something of the semi-religious halo and the prestige on which his authority rests. While a *roi fainéant* may fulfil effectively all the essential duties of sovereignty, an *autocrate fainéant* is an absurdity.

In these circumstances, it is idle to speculate as to the future. All we can do is to await patiently the development of events, and in all probability it is the unexpected that will happen.

The reader doubtless feels that I am offering a very lame and impotent conclusion, and I must confess that I am conscious of this feeling myself, but I think I may fairly plead extenuating circumstances. Happily for my peace of mind I am a mere observer who is not called upon to invent a means of extricating Russia from her difficult position. For that arduous task there are already brave volunteers enough in the field. All I have to do is to explain as clearly as I can the complicated problem to be solved. Nor do I feel it any part of my duty to make predictions. I believe I am pretty well acquainted with the situation at the present moment, but what it may be a few weeks hence, when the words I am now writing issue from the press, I do not profess to foresee.

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